

The Importance of Schema in Reading Comprehension

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AFFIDAVIT

I, (Hella Darwiche Ousman), hereby declare that this master's thesis has not been previously presented as a degree requirement, either in the same style or with variations, in this or any other university.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this research paper to my three wonderful children: Janin, Lian and Ahmad. I am doing this for you. My professional and personal development can serve as a model and inspiration for you now and in the future. I love you!

I would also like to dedicate this research paper for my husband, Basen Osman for supporting me in my academic studies and his constant motivation to keep on.

My gratitude to my parents, Dalal and Ahmad, for constantly believing in me and encouraging me, according to my mom's words: "to keep on walking" even when the road seems long and full of obstacles. Thank you, mom! Part of my personal and academic development, I owe them to you.

To my dear brother, my role model and inspiration. He took this road before and bet all obstacles. He used to quote Edmond Dantes in the Count of Monte Cristo: "Life is a storm, my friend. You will bask in the sunlight one moment, be shattered on the rocks the next. What makes you a man is what you do when that storm comes."

My first steps to start writing this research paper has not been easy. I would like to dedicate this paper as well to God. The most Powerful and Gracious.

To my grandmother. May your soul rest in peace and to those teachers and inspiring people that had touched me in one way or another in my 45 years of existence.

Thank you all!

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Abstract

Reading is an important language skill that students need to master in language learning. However, reading is seen as a complex operation for learners of English as a second language. The concept of reading as a skill has evolved in recent years. Learners of English as a second or foreign language do have language problems, but it is not so much extensive knowledge of the vocabulary and syntax that they need. What they lack is the fun and involving experience of connecting with the text. There have been different reading approaches used in reading and reading comprehension materials in the last two decades to engage learners of English in the reading process. This qualitative study was carried out with teachers in Colombia from private and public educational institutions with the aim of highlighting the existing teaching practices of teachers in different educational institutions and observe if these practices involve the schema theory and how. It has been proved that the adequate use of schemata is a key element for reading comprehension and a motivating factor for non-efficient L2 readers. For that, a survey, interviews, and document analysis were used to carry out this study. According to the findings, an absence of the schema theory in the activation of prior knowledge in reading and reading comprehension is observed. The results showed that the usage of the schema theory in the activation of prior knowledge is barely noticed if not omitted completely by the majority of English language teachers. Teachers worked and focused their attention on the last two phases of reading through different cognitive reading strategies, barely encouraging the activation of prior knowledge. It has been proved that the adequate use of schemata is a key element for reading comprehension and a motivating factor for non-efficient L2 readers.

Key words: Schemata, Prior Knowledge, Reading Comprehension, non-efficient, engage, efficient readers, poor readers, negotiation, interaction, activation of prior knowledge.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Encouraging learners to become effective readers involves equipping learners with the necessary tools needed to survive in life. “The best teachers know their pupils, encourage them, show concern for them, find out their interests, discover their learning preferences, and monitor their [reading] progress with a sympathetic eye” (Stevens, 1980, p.28).

Reading is usually defined as “the process of receiving and interpreting information” (Urquhart & Weir, 1998, p. 22), and it is one of the most important skills in language learning. We usually read for a purpose: to obtain information, for pleasure or social and academic purposes. Reading is “a description of reading has to account for the notions that fluent reading is rapid, purposeful, interactive, comprehending, flexible and gradually developing” (Grabe, 1991, p.378). Processes for comprehension include extracting and integrating information (Koda, 2005) and has become increasingly the result “of complex interactions between text, setting, reader, reader background, reading strategies, the L1 and the L2, and reader decision making” (Erler & Finkbeiner, 2007, p. 188). Thus, the reader “actively constructs the meaning of the text by comprehending what the writer intends and by interpreting it in terms of background knowledge” (Grabe, 1991, p.15).

Problem Statement

Many learners of English find the reading process a difficult, tedious, and laborious decoding process which often results in poor comprehension and low self-esteem (Auerbach and Paxton ,1997). This problem is related to different factors, such as the lack of use of background knowledge (Graham & Bellert, 2005), lack of reading fluency (Graham & Bellert, 2005), lack of vocabulary knowledge, (Clemens & Simmons, 2014), failure to distinguish between different text structures (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001), and difficulty in making inferences

(Hall, & Barnes, 2017). All these factors tend to have a negative impact on students' reading comprehension.

Reading is an important language skill that many EFL students struggle to understand, that is why, background knowledge generally improves comprehension (Shapiro, 2004). Studies that have supplied readers with background knowledge before reading have also found major benefits of prior knowledge on reading comprehension (Rawson & Kintsch, 2004). When EFL students are exposed to familiar reading topics, reading becomes much easier to decode and understand, and the interaction between the text, the writer and the reader leads to better comprehension and outcomes.

In Colombia many educational institutions omit or almost neglect the activation of learner's background knowledge in learners of English as a second language. Therefore, EFL students need to be presented with activities that activate background knowledge prior to reading to enhance reading comprehension.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to observe the teaching practices of English teachers in reading to see if they use the "activation of prior knowledge" as a pre-reading strategy to facilitate the reading process for learners. By doing so, this study intends to fill the gap in the research and provide some insights on the importance of enhancing the students' reading comprehension performance by using the schema theory.

This study targets to answer the following questions:

1. What are the teacher's practices for teaching reading in Colombia?
2. To what extent do these practices included schema theory activities?

Context

This study took place with 20 professional EFL teachers. The participants in this study were teachers from the public and private educational sectors in Barranquilla, Colombia. Teachers selected in this study encompassed male and female teachers from different public and private schools and one private university. All the teachers involved in the study had a degree in education and some others had a master's degree on teaching English as a foreign language. Their ages varied. Some of them were in their twenties, thirties, and forties. All had an excellent professional background in teaching and education.

Rationale

The aim of the study is to analyze teaching practices of English language teachers and identify the emphasis applied toward building background knowledge when approaching a reading text for the first time with students. It is of great significance to understand the positive effects of background knowledge on reading comprehension. In other words, the readers knowledge about different topics such as movies, music, history or sports can help them understand the reading text, because this knowledge exists as “cognitive blocks” and they are activated when stimulated (Aerbersold & Field, 1997).

This document is divided into different chapters, where ideas are presented chronologically to highlight the importance of this study. Chapter 1 is the Introduction part. This chapter provides a glimpse and an overview of the study in terms of its teaching context and the setting of the study. Chapter 2 is the Theoretical Framework part. This chapter explains the major theories that are relevant and important for this study. This provides like a map route of the different definitions of reading and reading comprehension and the different reading approaches. It sheds a light on the different learning strategies efficient readers use and implement when reading a text. It briefly explains the most important reading approaches and pinpoints the major differences

between effective and non-effective readers. It also defines the schema theory and its importance in the reading process. It highlights different researchers that support this theory and those who oppose it. It also reflects several studies in Colombia and outside Colombia who experimented and applied the schema theories at different educational institutions. Chapter 3 explains the Methodology. This chapter focuses on the implementation of the study and its different phases and procedures. The type of research adopted and the instruments for observations along the way. Chapter 4 describes the main results of the study in tight connection with the research questions accompanied with sufficient evidence that illustrates these results in an organized and narrated way. Chapter 5 is the Discussion part that examines, interprets and draws inferences from the findings. It helps readers understand the significance of the findings for the Colombian context and for the field of EFL teaching and learning with valid arguments. Chapter 6 is the Conclusion part that brings closure to the entire paper by highlighting the significance of the study, pointing out remaining gaps, discussing implications and suggesting issues for further research. Readers get a new level of insight on the research problem.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

Theories about teaching reading and reading strategies to a group of learners have been always debatable in most academic forums. Many theories and approaches had incubated the different schools of thoughts that can serve and help struggling readers in the reading process.

Reading

What is reading? For many, reading can be described as a process, a mental process, in which readers apply strategies and negotiation procedures for the reader to arrive at a point where the text is understandable and meaningful to them (Aukerman, 2008). Others view reading as a complex interaction where a text and a reader interact together, sharing similar experiences. Goodman (1996) describes reading as a guessing game in which the reader tries to decode a message which has been encoded by the writer. Moreover, the author implies that the reader interacts actively with the text and uses prior knowledge to comprehend the data reflected in the written text.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is one of the most essential elements to master in reading. It helps students move beyond decoding individual vocabulary words to build a solid understanding of the entire passage (Woolley, 2011). Academic success also requires students to be able to understand, analyze, and apply information they gathered through their reading (Clarke, Truelove, Hulme, & Snowling, 2013). Otto (1979) explains that in comprehension of a reading, the reader not only pronounces written symbols, but also seeks to understand and interpret the information contained in the text (p.147). Furthermore, Snow (2002) pinpointed that reading comprehension is “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language”.

Reading for Different Purposes

Readers have different purposes for reading. Koda (2005) explains that people do not solely read for the sake of reading but they have clear purposes, each of which requires a different way of text-information processing; for example, they scan a telephone directory to find a specific telephone number, they skim the newspaper to keep up with the latest news, they study a biology textbook to get ready for exams or they read a novel for pleasure (Koda, 2005). Therefore, readers adjust their reading speed and strategies in alignment with the intended purpose for reading in order to read efficiently, as approaching all texts in the same manner would be a waste of time and failure to assimilate the desired information (Grellet, 1981).

Different Reading Approaches

There are three crucial reading comprehension models that play an important role in guiding readers to better understand a written passage while engaging in the reading process. Literature on reading models has seen a significant transformation from viewing reading as a rather a passive process towards that of an interactive process (Grabe and Stoller, 2002; Koda, 2005). These models include the bottom-up model, the top-down model, and the interactive model. The three models differ from one another. For instance, the bottom-up model encourages readers to decode each word in the text for comprehension. In contrast, the top-down model draws a strong emphasis on the role of the reader's background knowledge in order to obtain meaning from a text. However, the interactive model looks at the reading process as an activity that requires interaction. The first interaction takes place between the written text and the reader's prior knowledge about the topic, while the second interaction occurs between the different reading strategies that the reader implements while reading (Ahmadi, Ismail, & Abdullah, 2013; Brunning, Shraw, & Ronning, 1999; Eskey, 2005; Grabe, 1991; Grabe, 2004).

Bottom-up model. To begin with, the bottom- approach was popularized by many in the 1970's. This approach emphasized the importance of vocabulary and grammar in reading. This dominant view, focused around the idea that once learners dwelt into learning grammar and lexis, they would become fluent readers. This approach defines reading as “a mechanical pattern in which the reader creates a piece by piece mental translation of the information in the text, with little inference from the reader’s own background knowledge” (Grabe and Stoller, 2002, p. 32).

Such a reader was not taught how to develop reading abilities, but rather reading was viewed as a written text which was manipulated by the readers for vocabulary, grammar and language structure purposes. In other words, struggling readers might spend time and effort by trying to figure out the meaning of each vocabulary word in the text which results in diminishes the processing capacity in the brain needed required for text comprehension (Ahmadi & Gilakjani, 2012; Pressley, 2000).

Top-down model. The top-down reading comprehension model was developed by Goodman (1967), who defined the reading comprehension process as a “psycholinguistic guessing game,” in which readers must bring into the reading their previous knowledge in order to predict meaning. In other words, the reader approaches the text with a hypothesis and the text helps them test this hypothesis. In addition, Smith (2004), another advocate of the top-down model, drew an emphasis on the important role of the activation of previous knowledge. This approach emphasizes the importance of schemata, and the reader’s direct contribution to the text (Alderson 2000).

According to this reading model, readers build up expectations about the reading text. These expectations are based on the reader’s previous knowledge about a specific topic. After building some expectations, the reader moves to interact with the written text and previous background

knowledge in order to prove their expectations. Therefore, the top-down comprehension model views the text as meaningless, only acquiring meaning by merging the reader's prior knowledge into the text (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Ahmadi, Hairul, & Pourhossein, 2012).

Interactive model. The interactive model emerged to pinpoint the limitations that were found in the bottom-up and the top-down reading comprehension models. Today, the interactive model is one of the most used models for explaining the process of reading comprehension and it confirms the importance of the interaction between a reader and the text (Ahmadi & Gilakjani, 2012). Similarly, Alderson (2000) pointed out that “the whole reading process is not an ‘either/or’ selection between the bottom-up and top-down models, but involves the interaction between both approaches” (p. 38).

The interactive reading comprehension model pinpoints the significant roles that both lower-level processing skill, such as word recognition and higher-level inference and reasoning skills, such as text explanation play in comprehending a text (Grabe, 1991). Moreover, Stanovich (1980) described the view of “compensation” in the interactive model by implying that both the bottom-up and the top-down reading processes work as a complement for each other in the reading comprehension process. According to Murtagh (1989) effective readers are those who can “efficiently integrate both bottom-up and top-down processes” (p.102).

The Schema Theory. Khemlani et al (2000) pinpoints that since the late 1960s, a number of theorists (Goodman, 1970; Smith, 1978) have developed interactive reading theories which place a strong emphasis on the role of the reader and the knowledge s/he brings to the text. These reading theories draw heavily on schema theory. The Schema Theory was first mentioned by Frederic Charles Bartlett, a well-known psychologist and the first to observe this human phenomenon. He defined "schema" as "an active organization of past reactions or experiences"

(1932, p.201). Through research and investigation, Bartlett (1932) "...observed how people, when asked to repeat a story from memory, filled in details which did not occur in the original." Humans construct schema (schemata) through psychological, social, and cultural experiences. It is a cluster of various pieces of information, knowledge, and memories that are stored and saved in the mind. It is also known as the Cognitive Framework.

The metaphor that best describes this phenomenon is that of a filing cabinet. The whole cabinet can be seen as the mind and one particular file as a schema. In that particular file, the mind can store a memory, knowledge or a particular information that we retrieve when it is triggered by a stimulus. It helps us save our cognitive energy and learn better along the way.

As stated by Rost (2011) “a way of referring to activated portions of conceptual knowledge, cognitive psychologists and linguists is often referred to modules of knowledge as schemata. It is estimated that any normal adult would have hundreds of thousands of available schemas in memory, which would be interrelated in an infinite number of ways. Further, new schemata are created and existing ones are updated constantly: every time we read, listen to, or observe something new we create a new schema” (p.57).

According to Brown (2001) the distinctive feature of schema theory regarding reading, is that a text does not carry meaning by itself. Rather, the reader brings knowledge, emotion, and culture – that is schemata, to the printed word. The important role of background knowledge on reading comprehension was highlighted by Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) and Anderson (1999). They strongly believed that a reader’s comprehension depended on the ability to connect the information that the reader gets from the text with the reader’s pre-existing background knowledge. Moreover, Cook (1989) stated that “The mind stimulated by key words or phrases in the text or by the context activates a knowledge schema” (p. 69).

The schema theory requires schema activation or background knowledge support before reading for better comprehension. Pre-reading activities play a significant role in schema theory reading models (Chen and Graves 1995; Demiriz 1998; Grabe and Stoller, 2002). According to Karakas (2002) reading activities prevent reading failures and supports the reader along the way. Reading involves three different stages: pre-, while-, and post reading (Ur, 1996; Alyousef, 2006).

The Three Different Stages of Reading

It is important to mention that reading strategies must be used in the three different phases of reading. Effective readers use different reading strategies during the different phases of reading known as the pre-reading, while reading and post reading in a reading classroom.

Pre-reading. Pre-reading activities activate the reader's schema and provide anticipation (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983; Grabe, 1991; Zhang, 1993; Grabe and Stoller, 2002) to get an overall sense of the meaning of the text. These activities will engage readers in more purposeful reading (Chastain, 1988; Ur, 1996). At the pre-reading stage, through the discussion of titles, subheadings, photographs, text structure identification, previewing, and so on, schemata can be activated (Abraham, 2002). Activating readers' prior knowledge of a topic before they begin to read may help students' comprehension (Carrell and Eisterhold 1983; Grabe 1991; Ur 1996).

According to Wallace (1992), one very popular pre-reading task is "brain storming". Here the teacher for instance, supplies the class with a particular key concept for students to call out words or phrases that they associate with the keyword supplied by the teacher. Brainstorming has many advantages as a classroom procedure. First, it requires little teacher preparation; second, it allows learners to bring their prior knowledge on a particular topic; and third, it is an activity that involves the whole class.

While-Reading activities. Nunan (1999) and Brown (2001) discuss scanning and skimming activities as while reading activities. Skimming is explained as "going through the reading material quickly in order to get the gist of it, to know how it is organized, or to get an idea of the tone or the intention of the writer" (Grellet, 1981, p. 58). Readers usually skim when they are under time pressure and want to know what the text is about or when they want to find out whether it is worth spending more time reading it (Grabe, 2009). Skimming allows readers to confirm their predictions about the content of the text and to get the main idea(s) by skipping

unimportant details. When readers skim a text, they usually look into pictures, graphs, or diagrams, read titles, subtitles. They skip details by focusing on the introductory and concluding paragraphs or the first and last sentence of each paragraph in order to look into specific information (Urquhart & Weir, 1998). Additionally, skimming helps readers to go through long materials without being worried about unfamiliar words (Pritchard & Nasr, 2004).

Scanning is another reading strategy used by students to locate information. While scanning, readers are mainly focused in finding the paragraph in which the information they are looking for is likely to be included and then rereading the specific paragraph more carefully (Grellet, 1981). Scanning is based on the belief that comprehension does not depend on reading every single word, phrase or line; but rather focuses on the idea of “selective reading” with the purpose of highlighting specific information while ignoring the rest of the text, which does not contain the information sought by the reader (Urquhart & Weir, 1998). Scanning allows readers to go through texts quickly in order to look for specific pieces of information, to answer questions or solve a problem and contributes to quick and efficient reading (Grellet, 1981; Urquhart & Weir, 1998). Therefore, scanning can help L2 students, particularly less skilled ones, abandon the tedious process of paying attention to every single word and detail from the top left-hand corner till the end of the document (Urquhart & Weir, 1998), which hinders comprehension.

Some common while-reading activities also include predicting, jumbled sentences, multiple choice exercises, inferring, and graphic organizers among other activities (Wallace, 1992; Lazar, 1993).

Post- Reading Activities. According to Lazar (1993) post-reading activities aid readers to make interpretations of the text and prepare them for writing activities and discussion. Moreover, Karakas (2002) proposes that at this reading stage, the readers are able to interpret the text by

implementing activities such as summarizing, question and answer, drawing conclusions, thinking aloud, and discussion which are some common post-reading activities.

Differences between L1 Readers and L2 Readers:

It is important to mention the differences between L1 and L2 readers. It is important to emphasize that Reading is cognitive in nature and demands the reader's attention, memory, perception, and comprehension (Sellers, 2000). In its broader sense, reading is considered a complex skill for L2 students, since it is limited to their cultural background, personal motivations and language limitations (Sellers, 2000).

When it comes to reading, L1 readers are able to skip or ignore the words, ideas or phrases that they consider unimportant to the whole idea of the reading text. They can employ and use different reading as well as learning strategies to decode words and ideas in a reading text. They are capable of looking for solutions when encountered with reading obstacles that hinder reading comprehension. Pressley and Afflerbach (1995), have summarized the complexity of skilled reading by stating: "Skilled readers know and use many different procedures [strategies] in coming to terms with text: They proceed generally from front to back of documents when reading. Good readers are selectively attentive. They sometimes make notes. They predict, paraphrase, and back up when confused. They try to make inferences to fill in the gaps in text and in their understanding of what they have read" (pp. 79-80).

Unoh (2012), highlighted the existence factors of reading problems in L2 students from slow reading, comprehension difficulty, inability to differentiate between main idea and details, inefficient recall, creative reading difficulty, and many others. L2 readers tend to get lost in the reading process; the texts tend to be long, complex, and loaded with information. Moreover, the language reflected in the text is lexically complex with long sentences and technical words (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). These types of texts could contribute to feelings of dread which in

return stimulate anxiety reactions. Reading anxiety, a feeling associated with worry when engaging in reading tasks (Oh, 1990; Saito et al., 1996; Sellers, 2000), is likely to have its influence on comprehension performance of L2 readers due to its ability to reduce concentration of L2 readers (Downing and Leong, 1982). L2 readers seldom skip unimportant words that can diminish their comprehension. Grammar-translation is a still widely used pedagogy in certain teaching contexts, and such type of learning may promote bottom-up processing (Sakurai, 2015) which makes reading more difficult and less exciting.

L2 students tend to struggle with a second language acquisition in terms of unfamiliar vocabulary words, grammar, language structures, phonological awareness, topic familiarity and the implementation of reading strategies. According to Horwitz (2008) “when reading in L2 a second language learner must deal with a much higher percentage of unknown words and language forms. Thus, the simply decoding of words is typically much more problematic in a second language” (p.117).

Lack of vocabulary knowledge may hinder students from understanding a text. Vocabulary serves as a powerful tool for the students to use English effectively. Schmitt (2000) reinforces that “lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language” (p. 55). Furthermore, studies carried out by Carrell (1987) and Irwin (1991), pinpoint how learners get discouraged when they have to decode reading texts with many unfamiliar vocabulary words that had not been addressed and internalized by their teachers.

Another important factor that may limit L2 students’ reading comprehension, is the degree of familiarity with the topic presented in a text. They need to feel familiar with the reading text to interact with it and relate to past experiences. Unfamiliarity with the reading text can cause anxiety in L2 students due to the cultural background of the reading text, since learners may be

unfamiliar with the culture, custom, and traditions of the target language under study (Saito, Garza, & Horwitz, 1999). These reading texts meet the demands of the curriculum in terms of grammatical and lexical views, making the reading text unapproachable. As noted by William (1986): “In the absence of interesting texts, very little is possible” (p.42).

In the selection of materials for teaching L2 reading, texts are chosen for vocabulary, discourse structures and grammar purposes. Motivation literature reinforces the importance to start researching foreign language learning motivation from an affective perspective (MacIntyre, 2002; Dörnyei, 2005, 2007; Meyer & Turner, 2006). It has been proved that carefully selected chosen texts, work on the affect of the learner. Affect; that is, interest, attitudes and emotions play a crucial role in engaging readers of a second language acquisition. Neuroscience through different scientific investigations, supply proof that “emotion” has a much longer history in evolution than cognition and how it has an essential and strong influence on learning. We learn better, if a text has a strong positive significance, since it stays in our memory for a longer period of time and the learning process is much rewarding. Affective factors research in foreign language learning has concentrated on constructs such as self-esteem and learners’ beliefs (Aragão, 2011). Efficient readers make connections to the reading text by associating their emotions, feelings, attitudes and ideas in this two way interaction. This is emphasized by Rosenblatt (1994) when discussing the Reader Response Theory, clearly and explicitly stated in the following extract:

Every reading act is an event, or a transaction involving a particular reader and a particular pattern of signs, a text, and occurring at a particular time in a particular context. Instead of two fixed entities acting on one another, the reader and the text are two aspects of a dynamic situation (p. 1063)

Moreover, L2 readers should be provided with reading texts that focus on the “content” of the text. L2 readers must learn to use language for social purposes for meaningful communication. Learners must be taught to see a text beyond language and integrate themselves efficiently into it. Richards and Rodgers (2001) believe that second language teaching must be organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus.

Besides, another obstacle that second language readers experience is the cultural aspect. Sometimes, students lack information about the original culture displayed in the reading material, making it difficult for them to understand the written text. In fact, one of the aspects that can make the comprehension of a text complex is directly related with the cultural background of it (Horwitz, 2008). It is not merely lexical components or lack of vocabulary knowledge of a text that makes reading difficult for L2 students.

Opposing Researchers

Over the years, schema was first introduced in reading by Rumelhalt (1980), Carrell (1987) and Hudson (1982) to emphasize the importance of activating background knowledge for more meaningful reading comprehension purposes.

Here, they see the written reading text as a social means, for both the reader and the text to interact and negotiate with each other, turning the reading experience into a meaningful one. As Anderson (1978, p.369) points out, "every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well". Williams and Moran (1989) pointed out the importance of the schema theory on the pre-reading activities. This activation of prior knowledge helps readers understand and interact with the reading text more efficiently. Rost states that comprehension researchers believe that activating appropriate schemata will help in understanding the incoming text (2011, p. 58).

Moreover, deficiency in schemas will result in a reading comprehension flaws. As Carrell (1988b) points out, "students' apparent reading problems may be problems of insufficient background knowledge" (p.245). However, some researchers disagree with the idea and implication that schemata help facilitate the reading process in L2 students. McNeil (2011) believes that prior knowledge is not as significant or important in reading comprehension. He carried out a study on 20 university English language learners, but his conclusions reflected only 1% variance in favor of schema or prior knowledge. Furthermore, Chen (2008) states that there is quite a huge impact on the importance of prior knowledge on reading. He did a research on 20 postgraduate students to study this relation between prior knowledge and reading comprehension and found out there was an important relationship. The absence of prior knowledge leads to reading misunderstanding and difficulty. Prior knowledge eases our capacity to understand a text much better.

On the other hand (Aebersold & Field, 1997), viewed how schema may fail "if the topic... is outside of their experience or base of knowledge, they are adrift on an unknown sea". That is to say, students fail to activate their prior knowledge when faced with unfamiliar topics. Other researchers saw the importance of extensive reading over the activation of prior knowledge. Hafiz and Tudor claim that: the pedagogical value attributed to extensive reading is based on the assumption that exposing learners to large quantities of meaningful and interesting L2 materials will, in the long run, produce a beneficial effect on the learners' command of the L2 (1989, p.5). In other words, researchers believe that reading comprehension and fluency can be achieved by encouraging L2 students to read extensively for better language acquisition. Extensive reading for both researchers, play a more vital role than schemata or the activation of prior knowledge. For Zhang, "comprehension is facilitated by explicitly introducing schemata through

pre-reading activities" (1993, p.5). That is to say, the first stage of reading aids readers in the activation of their prior knowledge. It is an important stage in the reading process, since it motivates and engages readers before the reading takes place. Orasanu (1986) claims that "the knowledge a reader brings to a text is a principle determiner of how the text will be comprehended and what may be learned and remembered" (p. 32).

State of the Art

In the next section, we will examine together five scholarly articles related to the importance of schemata and the different implementation of adequate reading strategies that can be used by language teachers to tackle some of the reading problems many students of second language acquisition encounter with reading comprehension.

Medina (2011) carried out a study in Antioquia, Colombia to investigate and examine the effects of strategy instruction in students acquiring English as a second language. Twenty-six students at the faculty of Nursing at Universidad de Antioquia were chosen to look into the effect of strategy training in reading comprehension. There were 24 women and 2 men. Their ages ranged from 19 to 22 years old. The researcher used three different instruments to collect data. The first instrument was a reading comprehension test which was made up of two paragraphs and 20 multiple choice questions that tested vocabulary, inference, main ideas and specific details. As for the second instrument, the researcher used an experience test relationship method which helped in the activation of prior knowledge. It is a method that helped learners become aware of the different reading strategies they used and implemented during the reading process. The teacher used a diary to gather information around the activities performed by the students. Another third instrument was introduced in this study known a learning perception questionnaire. It was applied by those participating in the research to discuss the experiences they felt when using those reading strategies.

The findings revealed the fact that students improved not only their comprehension in the reading process but were more aware of the strategies used and applied during reading .They were able to apply meta-cognitive awareness in using reading strategies. Oxford (1990) defined learning strategies as “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier” (p.8). Here the learner takes control of his/her own learning.

Also, Uribe (2015) carried out an investigation that aimed to solve a reading problem by determining the effectiveness of an explicit teaching of reading strategies in order to help students improve their reading skills. The participants for this research were first semester students of International Business at a private university in Santander. Two classes of twenty students each participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 17 to 21. They were given explicit instruction in reading strategies for 16 weeks as part of their regular English classes. The different data collection instruments applied in this study consisted of open questionnaires, diagnostic reading tests, reading tasks, progress tests and achievement tests for both qualitative and quantitative information.

The objective of this research was to determine how effective was teaching reading strategies explicitly for better reading comprehension. Findings showed that the reading strategies were recognized by the students after explicit instruction. In the pre-, while and post- stages respectively. Explicit instruction supports conscious learning and the use of a wider strategic actions. Struggling readers need to be guided to improve their reading comprehension by becoming strategic readers. Grabe points out that in “ Reading in a Second Language” explicit teaching of strategies can be taught to improve reading comprehension, and that both good and struggling readers use strategies but in different ways. Moreover, training students how to use reading strategies help them become critical thinkers.

In addition, Echeverri and McNulty (2009) carried out a study in Colombia to investigate and examine the importance of employing and using different strategies for reading comprehension. Thirty students, aged 13 to 15 in eight grade EFL class in a public high school in Envigado, Medellín took part in this study. The students reflected qualities of poor readers in English, due to low levels of English proficiency. The findings were based on an action research project. This research was done by organizing reading lessons with strategies before, during and after reading activities. Students were actively involved with the reading texts. The study also implemented 'graphic organizers' during the reading process to encourage readers to activate their prior knowledge and make predictions about the text. A set of questions for reading comprehension was also implemented as an instrument during the study.

Moreover, Abdelaal and Saleh (2014) conducted a quantitative study on the relationship between prior knowledge and reading comprehension with 20 students from UPM. They were students that came from different universities and completing a master degree. These students had an efficient command and mastery of English with some exceptions in inaccuracies. The students were 12 males and 8 females. The data collection instruments were chosen through the use of a questionnaire which showed an increase of prior knowledge on both topics related to computers and cellphones. The questionnaire also shed a light on their low prior knowledge with a topic related to insects and bees. So, based on the questionnaire, two reading passages were selected: Worldwide Loss of Bees a Growing Concern and Using Cellphones and Computers to transmit Information. Both were written by Alissa Fleck with a high degree of difficulty.

A questionnaire was made up and a quiz were used to examine prior knowledge. The questionnaire was made up of multiple choice questions and two open-ended questions. The test was supplementary with the questionnaire. So, they applied the questionnaire and quiz at the

same time. Only twenty students were selected in the process. The results reflected that students had high prior knowledge in the topic related to cell phones and computers. Students took a two-passage reading exam to show the relationship between high prior knowledge related to reading comprehension and low prior knowledge and reading comprehension.

The study reflected that students had better grades with the topic of their personal interest and familiarity. According to Carrel (1987) topics that tend to be not known by readers, makes it hard for them to infer and deduce meaning. The results show that the lowest grade was linked to the students' unfamiliarity with the subject under study. Through schemata, readers are able to apply adequate reading measures to highlight the most important information found on a reading text and exclude the least important (Gilakjan and Ahmadi, 2001). That is to say, in other words, that if the reader does not have background knowledge, the reader will have difficulty in the reading process and will not be able to understand the message or messages conveyed in the reading passage.

The findings show that with the reading passage with high prior knowledge, students were able to achieve better results. This again confirms the importance of the schema theory prior knowledge in reading. However, according to the study, other reading strategies must be taken into account by teachers, such as: working on memorizing, motivation, the decoding process, among others. The study showed that there is an important relationship between prior knowledge and reading comprehension. The more background knowledge the reader has on the reading topic, the better his reading experience. However, that does not mean that lack of prior knowledge leads to poor outcomes if the reader is an efficient reader.

The findings of this study revealed the fact that using reading strategies for better comprehension such as activation of background knowledge, prediction and the application of

graphic organizers as well as the application of comprehension questions, motivated students not only to read, but also to understand and enjoy the reading process. Teachers tend to ignore or omit these reading techniques and use reading solely for grammatical purposes. According to Robertson (2008) mingling all these strategies motivate and engage students into remaining curious along the reading process.

Finally, Khanam, Zahid, and Mondol (2014) carried out a study in Bangladesh to investigate the importance of building up prior knowledge or schemata in the reading process as an interactive way to achieve comprehension from both the readers and the text. Thirty-six students studying at Prime University in the capital city of Bangladesh and 12 teachers teaching at different private universities took part in this study. The students were in a group studying a basic English course. The subjects were from different disciplines of study. They bear some common characteristics- same mother tongue, same age group, with the goal to achieve a good command of the basic skills of the target language. The age limit of the student participants was 17 to 18. The findings were based on two questionnaires (one surveyed among the students and another among the teachers) with open ended questions. Classroom observation was also another method used by the researchers to see if background knowledge was being given attention in Bangladeshi EFL classes. The findings of this study mainly collected through the questionnaire and some practical classroom observation; reveal the fact, that almost all the teachers are well aware about schema activation, but most teachers ignore or omit these pre-reading activities and come directly to the real text using the grammar translation method which is still a bottom-up level of reading. Thus, reading is seen as a passive process by the students which they seldom enjoy. Enhancing students' background knowledge helps the learners to make correct judgments and predictions while they are reading the target text. The closer the match between the reader's

schema and the text, the more comprehension occurs. Williams (1987) highlights three different reading stages important for reading comprehension. These are the pre- reading, during reading and post reading stages. Of these, the most important for building background knowledge is the pre-reading phase where the teacher has the opportunity to activate and build upon the students' schema. Teaching L2 students to read is not achievable by simply choosing any text or reading materials and expecting the students to make sense out of them.

These scholarly articles have explored difficulties experienced by many teachers and students in reading and proposed strategies that can help make reading a more personal and interactive experience. Many teachers tend to neglect a key factor in reading comprehension known as the activation of schemata or prior knowledge usually manifested in pre-reading activities. Such approach, help students get familiarized with the text. They can bring their own experiences to it. This creates a clear interaction between the reader and the text, so the text in return is not seen as an object but rather an active process where students are involved in the reading experience. Teachers should consider this pre-reading phase to help students with a lack of motivation, low self-esteem and with reading comprehension problems to familiarize with the reading text. The articles also tackled the different reading strategies that could be implemented by teachers for better comprehension. Teaching reading strategies explicitly to struggling readers can help them use along the reading process to become efficient readers. It also encourages students to become critical thinkers in the reading process as highlighted and mentioned in one study.

The primary purpose of the different scholarly articles was to explore some of the difficulties faced by learners of English as a second language during the reading process on one hand and the reading strategies that can be used by readers to enhance reading comprehension, on the other hand combined with the ability to analyze reading texts, critically.

Reading research is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the students and to encourage and motivate them in the reading process. It is an essential skill, considered by many as the most important skill in language learning, providing therefore, constant research on this area.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The design of the study, participants, data collection instruments and data analysis procedures are discussed and explained in this chapter.

Research Paradigm

All research is rooted on some philosophical assumptions. There are many connotations and implications to the word “research.” By research, researchers try to inquire into or investigate something. Research is usually motivated and implemented by an aroused intellectual interest in a specific phenomenon for the purpose of seeking knowledge and even answers to some of the problems or issues presented in a study. The research paradigm for this study is interpretive in nature and analyzed through qualitative methods. Interpretive paradigm is a type of paradigm that allows researchers to observe the different perspectives and personal experiences of a group of people. Interpretivism according to Willis (2007) includes “accepting and seeking multiple perspectives, being open to change, practicing iterative and emergent data collection techniques, promoting participatory and holistic research, and going beyond the inductive and deductive approach”(p.583). Walsham (1995) explained that interpretive researchers are not reporting the facts; rather, they are describing and reporting their interpretations of other people's interpretations. That being said, the interpretive paradigm is subjective in nature. It allows the participants to express their opinions and share their own personal experiences.

Smith (1993) pinpoints that “there is no particular right or correct path to knowledge, no special method that automatically leads to intellect progress” (p.120). Interpretive researchers do not adhere to universal truths or doctrines for research, but rather their research are “products of a particular group of culture” (Smith, 1993 p.5). Interpretive researchers do not think rigidly but

rather observe and draw their observations from subjects; usually people who belong to a particular group or culture. It is usually rooted in a social context. This study falls under this paradigm, since it aims to describe and report the different interpretation and teachers' perspectives on their reading teaching methods.

Qualitative Method

For such type of research, qualitative methods are the most suitable means to understand and get an insight and in – depth information to such social problems that try to explore the “how” of things. According to Schwandt (2001): “Qualitative inquiry deals with human lived experience. It is the life-world as it is lived, felt, undergone, made sense of, and accomplished by human beings that is the object of study” (p. 84).

It is of significance to highlight the two main approaches and methods used in research in general. These are qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative research was the recognized research method until the early 1980's. Quantitative research relies on the collection of numerical data. Cohen and Manion (1984) define, quantitative research as social research that uses various empirical methods and statements. Moreover, Creswell (1994) defines it as a kind of research that has as a purpose to explain phenomena “by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)”. In quantitative methods, the main target and focus of observation is on a certain factor of behavior that is quantified. In this type of research, the researcher is objective in assessing that particular behavior under study. Furthermore, Bryman (2012, p. 35) defined quantitative research as, “A research strategy that emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of data”. He also defined quantitative research as, “A research strategy that emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (2012, p. 35).

Creswell (2009), on the other hand highlights that “qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individual or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p.4). A qualitative case study involves collecting information from different sources by using different research instruments like surveys and interviews to obtain a clear picture of the case under investigation. Qualitative study that has its roots in culture and sociology. The main objective of qualitative research is to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group or interaction. It is a process where the researcher tries to make sense of a social phenomenon. In this case, the researcher gets involved in the informants’ world and through interaction, seeks his or her perspectives. It usually occurs in natural settings and is based on assumptions. The emerged data from a qualitative study are descriptive. That is to say, that data are reported in words and not in numbers or pictures, like other approaches. Van Maanen (1979, p. 520) defines it as, “an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occur phenomena in the social world”.

The aim of this study is to observe if English teachers in both public and private institutions in Barranquilla, Colombia use schemata in their reading classes to improve reading comprehension, since students do struggle with reading. So the research questions that arise here are:

1. What are the teacher’s practices for teaching reading in Colombia?
2. To what extent do these practices included schema theory activities?

For such a purpose, qualitative approaches are best suitable to understand the participants’ main role in this study and to explore their experiences and their different perceptions in an interpretive paradigm where the researcher does not implement methods that supply concrete and

objective information about their participants; but rather try to get an understanding of the world around them and try to get data through “deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding” (Punch, 2009). That is why, there is a deep relation between interpretivism and qualitative methods that are both applied in this research. Furthermore, Thomas (2003) claims that interpretivists employ qualitative methods, because the interpretive paradigm “portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex and ever changing...” (p.6).

Case Study

Case studies apply various techniques in the collection of data from interviews, document analysis, surveys and observation. Case studies focus on understanding contemporary phenomena within their real settings where the boundaries between the context and the phenomena are not evident (Yin, 1989).

Population

Twenty teachers from the public and private educational sectors in Barranquilla, Colombia participated in this study. Teachers selected in this study encompassed male and female teachers from different schools and universities. All the teachers involved in the study had a degree in education and some others had a master’s degree on teaching English as a foreign language. Their ages varied. Some of them were in their twenties, thirties, and forties. All had an excellent professional background in teaching and education. The aim of the study was to observe the teachers’ practices for teaching reading comprehension in Colombia and see to what extent these practices included schema theory activities.

Data collection methods

Choosing the most suitable methods for data collection is one of the most important aspects of a research project. According to Creswell (2011), it is empirical to reflect on the purpose of

the study and the research question in order to have a clear perspective about the data instruments that will be implemented and applied.

Hancock and Algozzine (2011) explain that “qualitative approach may require individual interviews, focus groups, observations, a review of existing documents or a combination of data collection procedures” (p.8). Therefore, the data collection instruments implemented in this study were: surveys, interviews, and document analysis.

Survey

Survey research is defined as "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions" (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 160). Survey research can use quantitative research strategies by using questionnaires with numerically rated items or qualitative research strategies with open-ended questions. Surveys are usually used in social and psychological research to describe and explore human behavior (Singleton & Straits, 2009).

To design the survey as a tool for observation purposes, the researcher had to think about the research questions and aim of the study. For that, the survey had a consent form and a set of questions in a multiple choice form and open-ended questions written in the English language. There were 13 questions where teachers were invited to describe their class context, educational level, and the level of English proficiency of their students. The main question of the survey was asking teachers to describe a typical reading lesson. The schema theory was not mentioned, so the answers could reflect their real teaching practices without altering the facts and aims of the study. Eleven teachers, 4 male and 7 female teachers respectively, took part in the survey.

A survey is useful in describing the different features and characteristics of a large population which provides a concrete reflection about people's reasoning. According to Fink (2003), surveys are implemented to gather information and data about people's attitudes, viewpoints, opinion and perceptions.

Interview

One of the most popular approach used in qualitative data is interviews with participants. Potter (1996) has defined interviewing as a “technique of gathering data from humans by asking them questions and getting them to react verbally” (p. 96). The aim of the interview is getting information from another individual to gain a detailed account of the experience under study.

Moreover, interviews may take place in groups or face to face with a person (Merriam, 2009). Interviews are differently designed depending on the needs of the researcher and the information he/she is trying to acquire from this research instrument and technique. They are grouped into three different types: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews.

Structured interviews. This type of interview is a pre-planned and controlled way to gain information from interviewees. Here, the researcher writes down the interview questions before carrying out the interview. This type of interview is an effective way to focus on the target topic (Bryman, 2008). However, it tends to limit in-depth data.

Unstructured interviews. This type of interview is flexible in nature. It is similar to a conversation where the interviewer might ask a particular question and the interviewee can elaborate on his/her knowledge about the topic being investigated (Bryman, 2008). Interruptions are kept to a minimum providing a relaxed atmosphere for the interviewees (Dörnyei, 2007). This type of interview is suitable for researchers who want to focus on a specific phenomenon in depth.

Semi-structured interviews. It is common for social science researchers to carry out this type of interview where the questions are pre-planned before the interview. The interviewer gives the interviewee the chance to explain different topics through the use of open-ended questions. Therefore, it has been recommended that these open-ended questions be piloted in advance (Dörnyei, 2007).

In this study, the semi-structured interview questions aimed to pursue in-depth information around the research topic, in my case, about the schema theory. All the interviews were conducted in English since the interviewees are language teachers of English. The conversations were recorded. They were face to face interviews. Verbal consent was obtained from each of the participants on the spot. The researcher used a mobile phone and transcribed all the interview results of the interviewees. The transcribing process was done manually without using any transcribing software. This way, the researcher gets intimate with the data as she still remembers the context of the conversation that took place between her and the English language teachers.

Focus group interviews. This type involves usually a group of six to twelve interviewees (Dörnyei, 2007 p.144). It can generate rich data which is useful for the interviewer. Here, interviewees can argue and challenge each other. However, this type of interview needs to be prepared in advance. Moreover, transcribing is difficult when overlapping occurs (Dörnyei, 2007).

Document analysis

Document analysis was another data collection technique implemented in this research by looking into the English books used by the participants in this research to confirm, if what had been said, matches the contents and different skills taught in these books.

Documents are defined by Merriam (2009) “as the umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the study at hand.” (p.140). Moreover, Denzin (1970) argues “Document analysis is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation—‘the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon’” (p. 291).

It is important to mention that data will be analyzed through discourse analysis. In discourse analysis an exchange of information takes place, whether in the written or oral forms. Its main purpose is to convey meaning. According to Gee (2005) discourse analysis is the “analysis of language in use” (p.5). An analysis of the way language use can impact communication of beliefs within interactions between individuals (van Dijk, 1997). Discourse analysts analyze data through open-ended interviews, focus group discussions, field observations and other means of data collection (Potter, 2003). Taylor (2001) defines discourse analysis as “the close study of language in use.” (p. 5). People construct interpretations of their social world through language (Potter & Wetherell, 2001). That being said, the aim of this study is not to classify teachers’ teaching practices as right or wrong, but rather analyze the reading comprehension practices of teachers of English in Colombia and see to what extent these practices included schema theory activities.

Discourse analysis research involved an in-depth examination of ‘discursive devices’ such as use of categories and rhetorical features.

Ethical considerations

As the qualitative methodology involves human subjects, the researcher communicated and interacted directly or indirectly with the participants, thus emerging into their personal space, sets of values, strengths, weaknesses, and professional domain in order to collect data. This raises several ethical issues. According to Creswell (2003) the researcher has the moral duty to respect the privacy and rights of the participants applying the research study. Miles and Huberman (1994) mention various considerations that researchers should value and consider when analyzing information or data. They advise researchers to be careful of some important issues before, during, and after the research has been applied and implemented; such as: informed consent, harm and risk, honesty and trust, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity.

Therefore, ethical steps and procedures should be considered in order to protect the participants' anonymity, dignity, and privacy. In my survey, the following ethical procedures have been addressed:

The researcher explained to the participants – the teachers in my case - of the aim and purpose of the study prior to commencement. In this research study, the researcher assured the participants that their participation in the survey will not harm them as a result of their participation, since their participation is totally confidential and anonymous. The participants' names would not be shared and their identities will not be revealed. The researcher also made it very clear to the participants that the research was only for academic and scholarly purposes and their participation in it was completely voluntary. They were also informed that they were free to withdraw from the survey if they did not feel comfortable about it.

This route map guides readers and researchers with the research paradigm used in this research, the type of study that was carried out, the criteria used to select the participants and an overall statement of the data collection procedures employed in this study. In the next section, I will demonstrate and show the main results of the study in tight connection with the research questions by incorporating sufficient evidence that reflects clearly the results in an organized and narrated manner.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

The results of this qualitative analysis are presented in this chapter. It highlights the different results based on the surveys and pinpoints teachers' practices for teaching reading comprehension through interviews. Excerpts from teacher interview transcripts are highlighted for a more concrete and objective interpretation of the teaching reading practices carried out by EFL teachers in their English language classes. Finally, document analysis was used to examine the data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) by looking into the teachers' books.

Surveys

Table 1.

Teachers' Practices for teaching Reading Comprehension.

Teachers	Reading practices
Teacher 1	Activation of prior knowledge, scanning, analyzing main ideas and details, teacher and students reading aloud, comprehension questions and written task activities completion.
Teacher 2	Prediction based on looking at the title and pictures of the reading text, vocabulary instruction, reading the text, analyze main ideas and details, written task completion.
Teacher 3	Prediction based on looking at the title and illustrations of the reading text, whole/class teacher discussion, vocabulary and grammar structures, analysis of main ideas and details, written task completion.
Teacher 4	Emphasis on vocabulary instruction, and the elements of the story, skimming, scanning, reading out loud by the teacher, class discussion, written productions.
Teacher 5	Emphasis on vocabulary instructions and pronunciation.
Teacher 6	Posted questions for discussion, vocabulary instruction, read for gist, written task completion.
Teacher 7	Work on the analysis of the structure of the reading text, skimming, scanning, comprehension questions.
Teacher 8	Some activation of prior knowledge, comprehension questions, written task completion, project development.
Teacher 9	Prediction based on looking at the title, vocabulary instruction, silent and loud reading, emphasis on pronunciation, comprehension questions, class interaction, written task completion.

In Table 1 the practices of English teachers regarding the importance of the implementation of reading strategies in reading for reading comprehension are highlighted. The results show that

the majority of Colombian English language teachers that participated in the teacher's survey emphasized mostly the importance of teaching new vocabulary words and on asking comprehension questions in the oral and written forms for discussion purposes and assessment. From the results shed out by the surveys, we can see that little emphasis is given to the schema theory and precisely to the activation of prior knowledge in the first stages of reading for reading comprehension purposes. According to the survey, they encourage students to use prediction based on looking at the title and pictures of the reading text to set up a goal for reading. Moreover, emphasis is given to other reading strategies; such as, silent and loud reading, scanning and skimming of the text, and dwelling into main ideas and details. Some teachers do not even apply reading strategies before reading.

Interviews

Table 2.

Reading Comprehension Strategies fostered by English Language Teachers.

<i>Reading strategies</i>	<i>Results of the implementation of these reading strategies by teachers</i>
<i>skimming</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>emphasis on main ideas</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>work on details</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>scanning</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>inferences</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>answering comprehension questions</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>looking into the writer's intention</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>schema or activation of prior knowledge</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Discussion</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>loud reading</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>reinforce vocabulary</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>emphasis on grammar</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>finding clues based on linkers and vocabulary</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Production through writing and speaking</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>use of dictionary for vocabulary</i>	<i>1</i>

As it can be seen from Table 2, the findings indicated that Colombian EFL teachers that took part in the interviews manifested that the reading strategies they taught the most were: skimming and scanning. As expressed by one of the teachers: “*Normally, I do the skimming and scanning, that is something that I always do, because they have like a view of the reading overall.*”

Another teacher expressed the importance of implementing skimming and scanning during

reading ,because according to her words : *“I feel students do not like reading so you need to try to find a way to make the reading easy for them, so if they start by scanning or skimming, they don't need to focus on the whole page or information, because it is difficult for them, so they focus on one simple thing, which is maybe if they are looking for some vocabulary words they will only focus on that. By starting with simple steps, I think they feel less anxious about the reading.”* Another teacher went further by saying: *“...and generally the main practices that we use with our students is skimming and scanning .If we want them to find the details we ask them to scan and if we want them to find the main ideas we ask them to skim .”*

Teachers also emphasized the importance of reinforcing vocabulary knowledge. As one teacher explained: *“I also like reinforce vocabulary that is something that they have always struggled with vocabulary, so that is something that I really reinforce, too.”* Another teacher encouraged the use of the dictionary for vocabulary purposes by hinting that: *“... we also use the dictionary for the words they do not know if it is too advanced and if the purpose is for them to learn that new vocabulary.”*

Data from interviews showed clear evidence that Colombian EFL teachers believe that teaching reading strategies are very important in their reading teaching practices. Teachers also emphasized the importance of asking questions to check the comprehension level of their students. This is exemplified in the following excerpt: *“I make them questions to check comprehension.”* One went further to say: *“I want them to do like questions to understand what they are reading, not just about reading and that is it! Get the main idea, get the details and also key comprehension questions because when they are gonna finish their undergraduate classes, they are gonna have exams, national exams or international exams, so I think in that way, it will be better for them.”*

Few teachers did mention the activation of prior knowledge as a pre-reading reading strategy when asked which of the three phases of reading they reinforced. One of the teachers answered by saying that: *“I think the first one is the most important one, because that is the moment that we have, this opportunity that we have for students to connect the background knowledge they have and then to put it into practice by the time they are reading it.”* Another teacher simply said: *“ we read the title and we do some questions to activate schemata.”*

The results showed that Colombian EFL teachers use different reading strategies in their actual classroom practices. The results also showed that the most frequently employed reading strategies are: skimming, scanning, vocabulary knowledge, comprehension questions, predictions and inferences. Importance in the usage of the schema theory in the activation of prior knowledge is barely noticed by the majority of teachers.

Teaching Materials

Table 3.

Key activities in the pre-reading stage

Textbooks	Key activities in the pre-reading stages
Keynote Book by National Geographic	In the pre -reading section, teachers have students look into the title, pictures and quote of the unit very quickly. It uses a compelling excerpt to introduce the main idea, engage learners and encourage discussion. In the reading phase, students engage with the reading text by applying different reading strategies taught by the book. These strategies vary between: skimming, scanning, prediction, previewing, making inferences, understanding main ideas and details, looking into sequence of events, discussion and understanding gist. It also teaches students to think critically by posing different situations where they have to provide solutions in a collaborative environment.
English Please	Reading as a skill is focused mainly on looking into main ideas, details, inferences, answering comprehension questions and encouraging critical thinking in the target language.
Achievers A1+ from Cambridge	The pre-reading phase focuses mostly on acquiring and developing vocabulary knowledge. Students practice with pictures to recognize all the vocabulary words on the vocabulary list before the actual reading takes place. At this reading stage, the book tries to reinforce students' knowledge of any less familiar words with puzzles, vocabulary games and vocabulary exercises.
Pearson English	The unit prepares students by eliciting answers around a big question related to the unit. Vocabulary activities related to pictures, puzzles and vocabulary games and exercises are presented at this stage.
Literature 12th Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	Students skim the text, reread, take notes in the margin, look into the author's purpose and the structure of the text, underline unfamiliar words or sections, socialize with others about the text, and answer questions that help students understand and comprehend the complexity of the text.

Table 3 demonstrates that many of the teachers were book oriented. They encouraged students to read for main ideas, details, inferences, comprehension questions, vocabulary, and grammar knowledge as a pre-reading strategy. It is observed that some books, like Keynote by National Geographic encourages teachers to activate their students' prior knowledge by inviting them to look into the title, pictures and quote of the unit. It develops appropriate learning goals. It uses a compelling excerpt to introduce the main idea, engage learners and encourage discussion. In the reading phase, students engage with the reading text by applying different reading strategies taught by the book. These strategies vary among: skimming, scanning, prediction, previewing, making inferences, understanding main ideas and details, looking into sequence of events, discussion and understanding gist. It also teaches students to think critically by posing different situations where they have to provide solutions in a collaborative environment.

Pearson English and Achievers A1+ from Cambridge on the other hand, use vocabulary knowledge as a pre-reading strategy .It gives emphasis on the semantics of the text in terms of vocabulary words. Vocabulary activities related to pictures, puzzles and vocabulary games are presented at this stage.

Literature 12th Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, guides and encourages students to skim the reading text, reread it , take notes, look into the author's purpose and the structure of the text, underline unfamiliar words or sections, socialize with others about the text, and answer questions that help students understand and comprehend the complexity of the text.

English Please is another textbook used by teachers who took part in this survey. Reading focuses mainly on main ideas, details, inferences, answering comprehension questions, encouraging critical thinking all in the target language.

In light of these results, it could be concluded that Colombian EFL teachers were found to adhere to the textbooks' instructions resulting in poor use of the schema theory or the activation of prior knowledge in the first phases of reading. They rather emphasized other reading strategies; such as, skimming, scanning, vocabulary knowledge, and answering comprehension questions.

Discussion

The study was an attempt to observe the teaching practices of English teachers in reading and see to what extent these practices included the schema theory. On the basis of the results obtained, it is revealed that teachers focused their attention on the last two phases of reading through different cognitive reading strategies, almost neglecting the first stages of reading. They merely drew their students' attention on concepts related to reading the title and looking at the pictures and illustrations for prediction purposes in the first stages of reading. Despite the popularity of pre-reading activities and the activation of prior knowledge, there are limitations to their use in ESL teaching.

According to the findings, an absence of the schema theory in the activation of prior knowledge in reading comprehension is observed. The findings highlight the different reading practices used by teachers in reading.

The results of this study indicate that most of the language teachers that participated in this study, introduced students to different reading strategies during reading. These strategies ranged from:

1. Look for the main idea and details of the reading text.
2. Help students understand when information is implied or stated.
3. Make inferences to understand the different types of information presented in the reading texts.
4. Draw conclusions and make predictions during reading.
5. Use of context clues for word definition.
6. Discussion of the text in the written and oral forms.
7. Formulate and answer comprehension questions in the oral and written forms.

From the results of this study we can deduce that teachers seldom encouraged students to activate their prior knowledge before engaging actively into the reading text. For instance, it can be seen in the results of the surveys, the different practices employed by teachers for teaching reading comprehension. As shown in table1, teachers implement different reading strategies to help students achieve better comprehension by encouraging the use of scanning, skimming, the analysis of main ideas and details, prediction assumptions, vocabulary instruction, grammar structures, comprehension questions and pronunciation. From the results of the survey, only few teachers prepared students for the pre- reading stage in order to help students activate their prior knowledge for better reading comprehension. These results proved a claim made by Yin (1985) where he affirmed that even though the role of schema activation is essential in reading, it is often neglected by teachers in the analysis of a reading text.

The results of the interviews, also highlighted the different reading comprehension strategies fostered by English Language Teachers and pointed out to what extent these strategies include the schema theory. As it can be seen in table 2, the results show that the majority of Colombian English language teachers that participated in the interview emphasized the importance of teaching skimming and scanning as reading strategies. The results also pinpointed the importance most of the teachers gave to vocabulary reinforcement, on asking comprehension questions for discussion purposes, main ideas and details and on making inferences. From the results shed out by the interviews as highlighted in table 2, we can see that little emphasis is given to the schema theory in the first stages of reading.

This study also points out some of the teaching practices of language teachers that heavily rely on textbook instructions for teaching purposes as seen in table 3. As we know, one of the functions of textbooks is to provide knowledge in an easy and organized way to the learners.

Hutchinson and Torres (1994) argue that any textbook has a very essential and positive part to play in teaching and learning of English. According to Matthews, a textbook is "the main teaching and learning aid" (Matthews, 1985, p.202).

As it can be seen from the EFL textbooks used in this study as shown in table 3, a common feature presented in these books is the strong emphasis given on teaching new vocabulary words as a pre-reading strategy for reading comprehension. These vocabulary words are included in the margins of the Reading Comprehension passages.

As for encouraging comprehension during the reading process, these books include a set of questions at the end of each reading passage with the aim of encouraging class discussion and interaction at different points of the reading lesson. In addition, these EFL books encourage cognitive reading strategies from skimming, scanning, prediction, previewing, making inferences, understanding main ideas and details, looking into sequence of events, and discussion. Nowhere in these books, the learners are assigned extended pre-reading activities to promote the activation of prior knowledge. These books do not encourage activities that involve the schema theory. In general, the English books under study, solely ask students to look into the title and illustrations before reading. Students are not encouraged to relate the new information to old information already restored in their memory for better interaction and comprehension.

The findings of this study contradict the idea presented by many schema researchers; such as those, claimed by Anderson and Pearson (1984) who emphasized how 'schemata' stored in memory contribute in decoding the new acquired information and become part of the knowledge memory. This interaction between old and new information helps students understand the reading text under evaluation. The results of this study, however are not in line with these beliefs. If teachers do not help students to activate their prior knowledge, learners will be unable

to connect incoming information to the existing knowledge they already have, thus affecting negatively the process of comprehension.

In other words, readers constantly connect their background knowledge to the new knowledge in a text to help them make sense of the reading (Gunning, 2012). Moreover, according to Robert Marzano, "What students already know about the content is one of the strongest indicators of how well they will learn new information relative to the content" (2004, p. 1). It is during the 'before- reading' phase, that teachers must encourage students to activate their prior knowledge, set purposes for reading, ask questions and build up background. However, these findings indicate that the number of Colombian EFL teachers that took part in the interviews and surveys mostly emphasized skimming and scanning as the most important reading strategies, thus neglecting the activation of prior knowledge in their reading practices.

For effective comprehension, readers must have the ability to link the reading text to her / his own background knowledge. Teachers should not simply choose any text and expect students to be able to make sense out of the chosen text as the book materials used by many teachers in this study. The results of this study also contradict the idea presented by (Yule, 2000) where he states that instead of instructing students to simply open their books to a specific page and read, language instructors must activate their students' background knowledge before reading a text through a series of activities which would make them prepared for reading and lead to a better comprehension.

Furthermore, this idea is supported by Ajideh (2006) who maintained the belief that pre-reading activities are helpful in three ways: by building new schemata, activating existing schemata, and informing the teacher what the students know. Pre-reading activities that include role-play, visual aids, text previewing, lectures, and other similar activities, encourage learners

before the actual reading takes place by locating new information that will help them in return connect old knowledge to new knowledge around the content area. Students when come face to face with unfamiliar topics where no activation of prior knowledge is carried out by the teacher, they end up reading in a slow, text-bound manner, turning the reading experience into a guessing process (Carrell, 1987). From the results of this study, despite the usefulness of these pre-reading activities, we can observe limitations to their use in EFL teaching. EFL teachers' unfamiliarity with the significant role of background knowledge in reading comprehension practices, becomes an important issue to consider in L2 reading instruction.

Moreover, it is of great importance to learn how students 'process' and interpret textual data and information. Language instructors can implement a wide variety of reading strategies and techniques for students learning English as a second or foreign language. There are three different reading stages: before reading, during reading and after reading (Wallace, 1992). It is important to emphasize the importance of the pre-reading stage in building background knowledge for reading comprehension.

The importance of this study is to put on the map the importance of the schema theory and make teachers aware of its importance and contribution in reading, since the lack of prior knowledge can lead to failure and somehow, hinder comprehension. Educators of language must activate learners' prior knowledge to prepare them for reading through different pre-reading activities such as visual aids, semantic maps, predictions and discussions. As (Nunan, 1999) puts it "we interpret what we read in terms of what we already know, and we integrate what we already know with the content of what we are reading" (p. 256).

The activation of prior knowledge helps students avoid barriers and obstacles during reading and interact actively with the reading topic as much as possible. Ajideh (2003) describes reading

"not as a reaction to a text but as an interaction between writer and the reader mediated through text" (p. 2). Cognitive strategies encouraged and implemented by language teachers in the first stages of reading is of great importance for comprehension success. That is why, teachers of language should not neglect or omit this crucial phase of reading, but rather prepare students to embark in a successful reading experience. Henry (1990) pinpointed the importance of background knowledge by saying "limited world knowledge results in students who lack the capacity to comprehend what fully literate and well-educated professors assign them to read and expect them to understand" (p. 430).

Furthermore, Reynolds and Shirley (1988) highlighted the fact that if a reader has previous knowledge about the written text and is interested in the reading topic, then, he or she make little cognitive efforts to understand it. That being said, this ease in mental effort, motivates students to interact and dialogue with the text. As noted by Peretz and Shoham (1990), their study showed that students felt at ease with a topic of familiarity to them while they were somehow intimidated by an unfamiliar one. They had to deal with psychological issues such as anxiety and stress.

As manifested by Leloup (1993) "a learner may demonstrate more interest in something about which he or she has a certain amount of previous knowledge" (p. 6). Moreover, according to Leloup (1993) "moderate topic knowledge was associated with high cognitive interest, which in turn was related to high text recall" (p. 15). Gatbonton and Tucker (1971) went further to say that the interest of the reader decline if he is not familiar with the reading topic. As a consequence, he or she gets bored and frustrated during the reading process.

Carell (1989) found out that efficient readers tend to deploy global or top - down strategies such as the activation of prior knowledge for comprehension purposes, while non-efficient

readers were more inclined to use formal or bottom - up strategies. It is important for language instructors to direct students that show difficulties in reading comprehension with the necessary comprehension instruction, in the three different phases of reading to achieve meaningful reading results.

Therefore, trying to decode a reading text by implementing bottom - up strategies is not enough, since language does not merely rely on grammar and vocabulary but it goes further than these. The reader must employ top- down strategies such as the activation of prior knowledge to successfully understand and comprehend a reading text (Xie, 2005).

As Pearson and Valencia (1987) implied "at all levels of sophistication, from kindergartener to research scientists, readers use available sources (for example, text, prior knowledge, environmental clues and potential helpers) to make sense of text" (p. 727). "The schemata theory of reading comprehension proposes that structures embodying background knowledge provide the ideational scaffolding for understanding the setting, mood, characters and chain of events in a text" (Carrel, Devine and Eskey, 1989, p.79).

It is crucial for teachers to activate "background knowledge" during the pre-reading phase through different activities as a reading strategy for better reading comprehension. Research has shown that background knowledge activation aided students during the reading process and had a greater impact on comprehension. According to Chai (1990), pre – reading instructions are effective and had positive effect in the students' reading comprehension. These pre-reading activities are engaging and motivational in nature. Yesim and Muharren (2006) pinpointed that reading strategies play a crucial role in reading comprehension and should be employed by language teachers for students to understand the reading text much better. Furthermore, Cubuku (2007) also emphasized the importance of introducing reading strategies to help and guide

students during reading. Cognitive reading strategies improve the students' reading comprehension.

With the activation of background knowledge as a cognitive pre – reading strategy, it is hoped that students can have a better approach with the reading text for better comprehension. Teachers seldom prompt students' prior knowledge during reading.

In order to activate prior knowledge to increase comprehension, teachers could try the following pre-reading techniques and activities as reading recommendations. They should:

1. Brainstorm the topic of the reading text.
2. Encourage class discussions.
3. Implement visual and supporting materials to activate prior knowledge.
4. Connect the topic to the culture related to the students.
5. Encourage 'inquiries' to set a purpose for reading the textual material at hand.

Teachers should instruct their students to tie their background knowledge to the targeted reading material. Teachers, due to the lack of time, seldom develop such reading types of activities, but in light of the effectiveness of these activities, it is recommended that teachers do their best to use online resources, slides, pictures, movies, video clips and music to activate 'prior knowledge' for better reading comprehension.

Al-Issa (2006) set up a list of questions that instructors of the English language should address themselves when choosing reading text and reading materials (p.45):

1. Will my students be interested in reading such materials?
2. Will these materials be relevant to my students' English proficiency levels?
3. What content knowledge is to be extracted from these materials?
4. Will these materials cause cultural conflicts in the classroom?

5. How can I motivate my students and involve them in reading such materials?
6. What kinds of pre-reading, reading, and post reading activities and materials can be designed to increase my students ' understanding of these materials?
7. Do the reading material provide students with sufficient background information about the content of the text?
8. How much time and freedom am I giving my students to exercise their understanding of the materials?
9. Am I being sensitive to my students' hidden comprehension problems?
10. Am I helping my students' become more aware of the fact that reading is a highly interactive process?
11. Are my students changing their attitudes about reading?
12. Am I allowing my students to become independent, self - directed readers?

Teachers should try to incorporate schema activities to engage students in reading.

Some reading comprehension problems that readers face mostly deal with unknown vocabulary words, shortage of time, unfamiliarity with the topic and reading content, anxiousness, tedious content, failure in employing different and effective reading strategies, carelessness, and inferencing problems. Teachers should use up- to-date texts, activate and supply background knowledge.

Pre-reading activities:

According to Murtagh “inducing appropriate schemata through suitable pre-reading activities is likely to be extremely beneficial” (1989, p.102). Pre-reading activities go from carrying a class discussion about a specific topic which according to Anderson, aids learners to remember ‘knowledge’ they did not know they had (1999, p.14).

Semantic mapping is a useful pre-reading strategy that helps activate prior knowledge. For Anderson (1999, p.14), semantic mapping is like brainstorming where words, phrases, ideas and concepts are arranged and rotate around a certain topic. This technique aids students for reading. It is a very useful pre - reading strategy, since it assists students to link their background knowledge to the new information supplied by the reading text. It helps students remember stored information and use that information along with the new acquired information to help increase reading comprehension.

In addition, previewing is another useful pre-reading technique that can motivate students to predict the topic of the text by looking at the title and pictures presented in it. Swaffar et al (1991) point out the advantages of previewing techniques is that it allow students to formulate hypotheses about the text. Through stimuli in a text, such as the title, photographs, and illustrations; students are encouraged by their teacher to draw inferences prior to reading. According to Chia (2001), the aim of previewing is to help readers make some guesses or predict what the text is going to be about.

Also, formulating questions to encourage students to ponder about the issues presented in the reading text is another useful technique (Anderson, 1999, p.17). Interaction is encouraged through discussion in a whole - class activity. This technique also helps students understand better what they are reading. The activation of background knowledge enables students to relate to the topic, resulting in a flow of ideas and interaction between the reader and text.

L2 readers also need proper schema to be able to extract meaning from the text. Teachers must understand that L2 readers face challenges with the reading texts, due to cultural unfamiliarity with the reading topics that are usually loaded with unfamiliar vocabulary words and complex syntax (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983).

It is important to highlight that teachers create the habit of turning a reading session into reading every single word in the reading text as a recitation exercise. “Reading comprehension is the most important source for learners in EFL academic setting. Language learners receive little natural exposure to the target language outside their course materials” (Shatalebi, Zarei, 2010, p.277).

Moreover, for most English language teachers, reading is taught for pronunciation practices, vocabulary knowledge, reading aloud and answering text reading comprehension questions. Teachers should try to teach students to interact with the text for comprehension results. It is of great importance to train students to employ various types of reading skills in order to come in terms with the text and recognize what they read (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). In other words, when readers read a text, they try to merge what they already know with the new information to facilitate the process of reading comprehension (Anderson and Pearson, 1984).

It is important to highlight that one of the merits of this research was to put in the spotlight the importance of the schema theory in reading practices for comprehension. For many years, reading was viewed as either a top-down or bottom-up process before the schema theory’s reawakening. The readers’ background knowledge has a strong impact on meaning construction (Anderson & Pearson, 1984) as argued in this study. New acquired information can be better understood when the reader has background knowledge; since, the reader makes a better contribution to the text itself when combining both old and new information (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Richgels, 1982).

However, several limitations were presented in this study. A very limited sample size participated in this study. While the findings offer insight about the practices of teachers in reading and the use of the schema theory, it is important to mention that the data collected came

from a small group of teachers who willingly took part in in this study. We can see that only nine language teachers answered the survey questions and eleven teachers took part in the interviews.

Another limitation encountered by the researcher in this study was the use of online survey which was also met with a small number of responses from behalf the participants involved in this study. Eventhough the survey was sent to a large group of teachers, only few of them participated in the survey. It is important to pinpoint that for this study, teachers from abroad were invited to complete the survey with the purpose of observing the reading practices of English teachers outside Colombia and see if their reading practices included the schema theory, but the survey was not met with enthusiasm and none of these teachers submitted the survey.

It is important to point out, that another limitation found in this study was to conduct face- to - face interviews for several reasons: distance and incompatible schedules between the researcher and the participants hindered the process. Some participants being reluctant to voice their opinions and express their thoughts openly and on the spot. Another reason that made this approach difficult was the availability of the teachers that were asked to be interviewed. It was somehow difficult to find time that worked for both the participants and the researcher.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of the present study showed that teachers make little emphasis or almost neglect the importance of the pre-reading phase, particularly, the activation of prior knowledge to facilitate reading comprehension due to the lack of time and effort required in the development of these pre-reading activities which are crucial for better reading understanding. Abraham (2002) has reported that teaching reading “demands that the teachers activate the students’ schema during the pre-reading phase by helping students recognize the knowledge that they already have about the topic of a text” (p. 6). Thus, the way of teaching reading is very essential and important. Students must enjoy the reading process, so teachers must facilitate and design activities around the schema theory to facilitate the achievements of their students during reading.

Overall, the results of this study have shed light on the reading practices of English language teachers and it is easy to deduce that teachers need guidance to improve their reading teaching performances in the first stages of reading. Beliefs are hard to measure though they were measured in this study through a survey, semi- structured interview and document analysis. Thus, overall generalization is quite difficult and further studies can be carried out to infer teachers teaching practices.

The activation of prior knowledge will allow students to efficiently brainstorm key ideas, accumulate and highlight important text information, make predictions and narrow down the purpose of reading. Therefore, it is of great significance for English language teachers and learners to comprehend and understand the major role of content schemata in reading

comprehension and the implementation of different schemata activation strategies to allow students to read efficiently.

English language teachers' lack of knowledge about the importance of prior knowledge and the lack of professional training on different schemata activation strategies may hinder reading comprehension in the learning process.

That being said, it seems significant that teachers should try to prepare students with a schema-theory based reading instruction with emphasis on the activation of readers' background knowledge. Efficient use of this kind of teaching pedagogy will reduce low linguistic capability and encourage EFL learners to be efficient readers. It is highly important that teachers should train their students to associate their background knowledge to the target reading material. This can be done by introducing suitable pre-reading activities as mentioned before. Pre-reading activities are efficient learning tools to better understand reading texts. Many studies have found pre-reading activities as facilitators of the comprehension of reading texts as learners link their prior knowledge to the text in hand to deal with the structure and the content of the reading material.

However, teachers due to the lack of time and efforts may feel overburden in the development of these activities, but taking into account the outcomes and positive results of these activities in improving reading comprehension, it is highly recommended that teachers should try their best to use audio visual materials that include resources found online, pictures, slides, songs, movies, games, discussion among other resources to activate their students' content schemata at this important and crucial pre-reading phase to enable them to engage actively in reading.

Similarly, it is also important that teachers should analyze the reading difficulties their students face in reading and try to aide them in minimizing these reading obstacles by activating their background knowledge and supplying them with familiar reading topics in terms of information and culture. It is recommended that English language teachers in Barranquilla should be supplied with in-service training about the appropriate strategies related to content schemata activation.

In English classrooms, teachers can come up with different attractive pre-reading techniques such as visual aids linked to the topic, encourage discussion, activate their background knowledge through brainstorming or semantic mapping to help students activate their background knowledge which in turn can help students create a bond with the reading text. Here, teachers are aiding students to increase their knowledge, develop language and understand the reading better. As we know, students that struggle with reading do not become actively involved with the text nor use the adequate reading strategies to improve comprehension. That being said, it makes sense the use of the schema theory in the different phases of reading to help struggling readers become active participants in the reading experience.

Likewise, teachers must work in teams to work on the curriculum to identify clear learning objectives by taking into account the schema theory and its importance in the different phases of reading for better comprehension. They can learn from each other, share personal experiences and gains in their teaching practices to achieve success.

Pre - reading activities encourage and motivate learners before the actual reading takes place. Students when come face to face with unfamiliar topics where no activation of prior knowledge is carried out by the teacher, they end up reading in a slow, text - bound manner, turning the reading experience into a guessing process (Carrell, 1988).

For English language teachers, teaching reading must not be directed for pronunciation practice, vocabulary knowledge, reading aloud and answering text reading comprehension questions. Teachers must try to teach students to interact with the text for comprehension results. It is of great importance to train students to employ various types of reading skills in order to come in terms with the text and recognize what they read (Krashen& Terrell, 1983).

Recommendations

English language instructors should enhance the activation of students' background knowledge in reading for reading comprehension purposes. It is important to pinpoint that some of the textbooks used by English language teachers are poor models and present gaps to meet the wants and needs of L2 students. These books tend to be predictable and monotonous, since they follow a repetitive pattern. As a result, these types of English textbooks are responsible for students' poor reading skills. They contain unfamiliar topics with extended lists of vocabulary words that make comprehension almost impossible to achieve, so under such circumstances, teachers must plan their own activities to enrich the learning experiences of their students. Nevertheless, English teachers must be aware of the significance of developing additional authentic material into the language classrooms, especially material that is omitted and not incorporated into language textbooks.

Definitely, textbooks are not enough to reward students with an efficient and meaningful reading experience. English teachers often rely on textbooks, because the teacher's book supplies all the methodological procedures needed for teaching a language class. However, it is the teacher's responsibility to provide additional and supplementary materials that deal with real-life situations and authentic use of the language under study for meaningful interaction. It has been observed that many language textbooks neglect the activation of prior knowledge in the first stages of reading and as a result language learners achieve poor reading results.

Teachers should try to minimize the difficulties students face during the reading process by activating their schemata with familiar topics and contents which will lead to better interpretation of what is being read. Failure to understand reading texts demotivate learners and as a result they act passively in most of their language classes. They do feel overwhelmed and disappointed if

the reading material goes beyond their background knowledge and their capability to comprehend the general meaning of texts. When reading is viewed as a process, the reader and writer interact together and different reading strategies; such as the activation of prior knowledge, are put into play (Wallace, 2001).

The findings of the present study have a number of pedagogical implications for teachers, creators of teaching materials and curriculum developers. EFL learners would strongly benefit from introducing and integrating the schema theory in the different phases of reading into the existing curricula. Language teachers could enhance their learners' reading comprehension by using different activities that help students activate their prior knowledge which are proven to be effective in the comprehension of reading texts. Therefore, activities that help in the activation of prior knowledge should be included the official curricula, textbooks and be taught by teachers in their reading classes.

It is also important to pinpoint that training should be supplied to English language teachers on the schema theory and its importance in reading comprehension. However, many educational institutions, whether in the public or private sectors in Colombia, do not provide teachers with the necessary amount of professional development. In-service teacher-training programs are insufficient. These programs are important in updating and developing teaching English language skills. In some cases, teachers are being passive in helping develop and improve the reading skills of their students, specifically the activation of prior knowledge. They are unfamiliar with most recent developments in language teaching. Teaching grammar, vocabulary and translation seemed to be an everyday practice in these reading classes. English is taught as a subject not as a language. English classes tend to be teacher oriented where students barely participate in the learning process.

As we know, nowadays, research in the educational field is focusing on the development of teachers. According to Charlotte Danielson, teaching is a very complex work and educators must improve the quality of their teaching. Teachers must be engaged and fully committed to improve professionally.

Finally, this study is very important in contributing ideas for emphasizing the importance of the first stages of reading and the activation of prior knowledge in classroom settings with students that struggle in reading and have a low linguistic proficiency that tends to turn the reading experience into an unenjoyable process. Since I am a great supporter of the importance of the schema theory with an emphasis in the activation of prior knowledge, I am including a sample of an ordinary reading lesson where the activation of prior knowledge was implemented in the three different phases of reading (see Appendix C).

First, students have been assigned to read about the favelas of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. However, before asking students to read about the favelas, the teacher builds up background knowledge to motivate and prepare students for the upcoming reading text. In this case, the teacher chooses to play a song by Michael Jackson that portrays vividly the neglected favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Here, the teacher prepares students to activate what they already know about the favelas of Brazil before the actual reading. The name of the song is: “They Don’t Care About Us.” After watching the song, the teacher carries out a class discussion by posing questions to further help students activate their previous knowledge and prepare them for the reading process. The teacher asks:

1. Where do you think this song takes place?
2. What do you know about the favelas of Rio de Janeiro?
3. Do you face the same conditions of poverty and violence in Colombia?

4. What do you think is the aim of the singer through this song? So many social issues to tackle, right?

5. So, what do you think our next reading topic is going to be about?

The teacher informs students that they are going to watch a TED Talk where they are going to learn how two Dutch social entrepreneurs tell the story of how they began their project of transforming the favelas of Rio de Janeiro through painting. Transforming neglected and poor places into works of art. Here, the teacher works furthermore on activating their prior knowledge through a TED Talk video to encourage students to link the information they already have about the favelas with the new upcoming information. They discuss in groups of four what they learned from that talk and then share their ideas and thoughts in class. Students are now ready to read the reading text using different reading strategies and learn more about the favelas of Rio, its history of violence and poverty and its transformation in the hands of two Dutch artists through art. Students are ready to socialize about the reading content and answer comprehension questions. At the end of the unit, the teacher can ask students to group up in groups of four and volunteer on a social project of transformational implication in their own community such as the two Dutch artists did in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Examples are supplied:

1. Volunteer your time to elderly people.
2. Clean up a beach.
3. Collect medicine to sick children with low resources.
4. Supply food to Venezuelan refugees in Barranquilla.
5. Turning areas into green spaces.
6. Visiting prisoners and supplying them with the necessary tools to improve themselves through motivational talks.

7. Cook meals for the underprivileged.
8. Carry out a campaign to donate things people in your area do not need anymore.
9. Arrange a bake sale to gather money to donate school supplies to less fortunate children.
10. Find shelter to street dogs.

Students must carry out the activity together and apply the action. They must provide photos, videos or slides of the activity they are planning to carry out. They must present their work to the class through a PowerPoint presentation, video or poster (see Appendix C).

Having introduced students to different pre-reading activities before reading the text, help students add new information to their existing schemata which results in better reading comprehension. Students are then invited to read the reading selection. Here, they can skim the reading text, build up vocabulary knowledge, read in depth, take notes, answer a series of comprehension questions and incorporate all these new acquired knowledge into a greater schema. Therefore, it is important for teachers to have knowledge of the schema theory in reading.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A. Teacher’s Survey

Thank you for participating in the research project titled “A Survey of Reading Comprehension Practices of Teachers of English in Educational Institutions.” It is being conducted by Hella Darwiche Ousman, an English teacher, studying for her master’s degree at Universidad del Norte in the city of Barranquilla, Colombia. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes.

The procedure involves filling an online or written survey that will take approximately 30 minutes. Your responses will be completely confidential and anonymous. Your name will not be used and your identity will not be associated with your responses in any published format and your survey will be saved in a personal file for this particular research study. The survey questions will be related to general information about your class and teaching practices with an emphasis on reading.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact me. My email address is hdarwiche@uninorte.edu.co. Thank you so much for your participation. Your experience is of great value.

Grade level: ()

Name of school: ()

Purpose of the survey:

Describe a reading comprehension lesson performed normally in your class in a detailed manner.

What is your level of education?

1. High school
2. Technical/trade/vocational training
3. Bachelor's degree
4. Master's degree
5. Doctorate degree

How long have you been teaching English?

1. 0 to 5 years
2. 6-10 years
3. 11-15 years
4. 16-20 years
5. 21 years or more

What education level(s) do you teach?

Elementary

Intermediate

High school

University

Where do you teach English?

1. Public educational institution
2. Private educational institution
3. Both

What is the average number of students in your English classes?

1. 8 -15
2. 15 -20
3. 20-30
4. 30-40
5. More

How would you describe the level of English efficiency in your L2 students in Speaking?

How would you describe the level of English efficiency in your L2 students in Reading?

How would you describe the level of English efficiency in your L2 students in Listening?

How would you describe the level of English efficiency in your L2 students in Writing?

What is the nationality of your students?

1. Lebanese
2. Colombians
3. Emirati
4. Other _____

Do you use a textbook to teach reading inside your classroom? If yes, which one? If not, what kinds of materials are you using in your classes with your students?

Please, describe a typical reading lesson for your students in details .Explain as much as you can.

[illegible]

How do you assess their reading comprehension? Explain.

Thank you for taking part in this survey

Appendix B. Interview with Language Teachers

Interviewer's name: Hella Darwiche Ousman

A set of interviews were carried out by Hella Darwiche Ousman with teachers of English Language in both public and private educational institutions on their reading practices through an undefined period of time.

Interview 1

Interviewer: Which of the three phases of reading do you reinforce?

Teacher: I reinforce the last, the last one after reading because.. Hmm.. I like the students, eh, to go beyond, because most of the time they are like very literal questions. I want them to do like questions to understand what they are reading, not just about reading and that is it! Get the main idea, get the details and also key comprehension questions because when they are gonna finish their undergraduate classes, they are gonna have exams, national exams or international exams, so I think in that way, it will be better for them.

Interviewer: What reading practices do you use constantly when teaching reading?

Teacher: scanning and skimming!

Interviewer: Why do you consider these practices important or in your case, that practice important?

Teacher: they have to get the main ideas and also go into the details. Both things are really important for me.. Umh.. Also try to use their prior knowledge, because, hmm.. Before I show the title or a reading I say like a word or. A phrase related to the reading and say: what do you

think is going to be the reading about? So, with their prior knowledge, we start talking and have some speaking before the reading practice.

Interviewer: nice! Thank you.

Teacher: anytime.

Teacher: that's it?

Interviewer: that's it!

Teacher: I thought there was going to be more.

Interviewer: no!

Teacher: good

Interview 2

Interviewer: Which of the three phases of reading do you reinforce?

Teacher: I think that during phases is the most important and also is very important because in this phase you can find the whole idea about the text.

Interviewer: What reading practices do you use constantly when teaching reading?

Teacher: I think that to engage students to discuss about this phase. It is just a good strategy.

Interviewer: Discussion!

Teacher: Yes!

Interviewer: So you work on discussion? What kind of discussion?

Teacher: About the reading. About the during phase.

Interviewer: Why do you consider these practices important or in your case, that practice important?

Teacher: This practice is important because we engage, we engage the students, use motivate the students to find the essential things about the reading.

Interviewer: Thank you so much, teacher.

Teacher: You are welcome, Hala

Interview 3:

Interviewer: Which of the three phases of reading do you reinforce?

Teacher: Well, first I do a pre-reading. I normally use strategies like... Ohm.. Analyzing the title or if there is a picture they have to like to guess what the reading is about. Then, we do like the reading. They read, I try to combine like the pronunciation of the words, how to find key words in the reading, things like that and then the reading questions like at the end, so to know they really understood the, the reading.

Interviewer: What reading practices do you use constantly when teaching reading?

Teacher: Wow! Normally, I do the skimming and scanning, that is something that I always do, because they have like a view of the reading overall and also specific details that I want them to know and I also like reinforce vocabulary that is something that they have always struggled with vocabulary, so that is something that I really reinforce, too.

Interviewer: Why do you consider these practices important?

Teacher: Well I don't really have like one in particular. I think all of them are important. Like to have a good tool (I am not able to understand the last word) develop reading comprehension as a poor (I cannot understand the last word in the sentence).

Interviewer: OK, thank you so much.

Teacher: You are welcomed

Interview 4:

Researcher: HI

Teacher: Hello.

Researcher: which of the three phases of reading do you reinforce?

Teacher: ummm, it depends on the class of course. But I think it is important to, like I spend a lot of time on the pre-reading activity, because I feel is the one where we get our students attention, so I try to start with that. I spend more time preparing that one through a game, a vocabulary activity to start with the whole reading thing

Researcher: so, which reading practices do you constantly use when teaching this pre - reading phase?

Teacher: I try to focus on vocabulary or grammar to get it from the reading. So, some skimming and scanning will be the strategies I will always use.

Researcher: why do you consider these practices so important?

Teacher: I feel students do not like reading so you need to try to find a way to make the reading easy for them, so if they start by scanning or skimming, they don't need to focus on the whole page or information, because it is difficult for them, so they focus on one simple thing, which is maybe if they are looking for some vocabulary words they will only focus on that. By starting with simple steps, I think they feel less anxious about the reading.

Researcher: thank you so much, Vero.

Teacher: you are welcome.

Interview 5:

Researcher: which of the three phases of reading do you reinforce?

Teacher: Umm,I think the first one is the most important one, because that is the moment that we have, this opportunity that we have for students to connect the background knowledge they have and then to put it into practice by the time they are reading it .

Researcher: so, which reading practices do you constantly use when teaching this pre - reading phase?

Teacher: what I try to do ,is that I try to concentrate on the skills ,like more than, if they know or if they don't know the vocabulary or things like ,to concentrate on the skills ,like concerns with main ideas ,details and making inferences regardless the level in the case they don't understand a text ,they might be able to answer it by using the skills that would be, like the strategies that I will use.

Researcher: why do you consider these practices important?

Teacher: I think these practices are important, because we are preparing our students to be ready for the real life and also real life situations if they need to take exams like a TOEFL or IELTS, they will have the competence and the competences for them to be able to answer the questions efficiently.

Researcher: Thank you so much

Teacher: You welcome

Interview 6:

Researcher: which of the three phases of reading do you reinforce?

Teacher: I think I use, I don't know maybe post reading is the one that I use to spend more time on it.

Researcher: so, which reading practices do you constantly use when teaching reading?

Teacher: Sometimes I analyze the language, choices that the author uses so I try to, tell the students that try to emphasize on the whole message and not on every part or every word that the author is using ,but basically the message and the intention of the text.

Researcher: why do you consider these practices important?

Teacher: It is very important because the literal part is a good skill, but the most difficult one to develop is inference and that is what I think like, trying to decode and trying to identify the intended message it would be a good practice for inference. Thank you very much.

Researcher: Thank you.

Interview 7:

Interviewer: Which of the three phases of reading do you reinforce?

Teacher: The reading phase itself is the one that I spend more time teaching.

Researcher: so, which reading practices do you constantly use when teaching reading?

Teacher: for the levels I teach we really focus on comprehension ,we focus on details ,we also focus on inferences and vocabulary context and generally the main practices that we use with our students is skimming and scanning .If we want them to find the details we ask them to scan and if we want them to find the main ideas we ask them to skim which is skimming is reading the first sentence and the last sentence of each paragraph to understand what the paragraph is about and be able to do that with the whole article or essay to tell us what is about what. And now what we do is focus on the order of the text where finding clues can tell them like if the text is put out of order can you put it back in place based on linkers and other vocabularies that helps them find the right order.

Researcher: why do you consider these practices important?

Teacher: reading is the most basic part of learning, so if you can't read you are not going to be able to process information and I think a lot of people don't understand that there is very specific places to look to find the information the way we are all trained to write all the information is going to be right there for you .Everything is always right at the beginning and if you learn to find that information then you will be able to process the information a lot quicker and you will be able to understand it more quickly.

Researcher: Ok, thank you so much.

Interview 8:

Interviewer: Which of the three phases of reading do you reinforce?

Teacher: Usually a focus most on the after reading because I like production and I like them to show that they have understood and they have critical thinking when they have to collect information .Also, 'cuz I have some of the highest levels, like level VIII or level VII for International Affairs, so they already know how to find answers and they are very good reading for answers so is more about what can you do with that knowledge.

Researcher: so, which reading practices do you constantly use when teaching reading?

Teacher: usually I start by explaining the reading strategies that we are going to use and we read the title and we do some questions to activate schemata, because I help them..i think the readings that we talk about at some point everybody has talked about them in Spanish or English ,so they have some knowledge and it helps them understand more or less of what they see .We also use the dictionary for the words they do not know if it is too advanced and if the purpose is for them to learn that new vocabulary .And lastly ,the new one I am using is that we are making questions about the reading and then the answering ,after like they read the title or they use a highlighter to

identify these riddles ,because sometimes they become really messy and they don't really know where to look for the answers.

Researcher: why do you consider all these practices important?

Teacher: ummm, reading is an interaction between the reader and the text .It is just not something that you get passively, you are not just receiving information. Therefore I consider that people actually need to know how to approach a text and do something with it, because if not, it is not really reading.

Researcher: thank you so much.

Interview 9:

Interviewer: Which of the three phases of reading do you reinforce?

Teacher: I reinforce the after reading phase, because in that phase I can check the comprehension of the students and I can assess them as well .I also can reinforce their weaknesses like vocabulary and pronunciation.

Researcher: so, which reading practices do you constantly use when teaching that post –reading phase? Since you prefer that phase, that post-reading phase?

Teacher: yes ,yes I understand .First ,they read and then I ask them to highlight the vocabulary that they do not know ,then I make them questions to check comprehension ,so and finally I ask them for the main ideas and what would they do and if they were in that situation or what is their opinion about the reading ,so those are the practices to reinforce that post -reading phase.

Researcher: why do you consider all these practices important?

Teacher: I strongly believe in scaffolding .I cannot ask them right away for an answer if first I have not built the knowledge or the steps, if I have not gone through the steps to help them to be

able produce at the end .So, that is why I help them through that phase, I help them to understand and to comprehend .So, it is a process that we do together.

Researcher: Thank you.

Teacher: You are welcomed.

Interview 10:

Researcher: Which of the three phases of reading do you reinforce?

Teacher: I like to reinforce all of them equally with different activities during the class, but if I notice that the students have a weakness, for example in pre-reading, while reading and post reading then I tend to (..) on that one.

Researcher: But do you usually use the three phases of reading when it comes to reading comprehension?

Teacher: Yes, I try.

Researcher: so, which reading practices do you constantly use when teaching reading? Which ones do you consider important when teaching a reading comprehension test?

Teacher: skimming and scanning .The identification of key words.

Researcher: by key words you mean vocabulary?

Teacher: vocabulary I also teach them how to use like inference meaning from context.

Researcher: inferences. So you use reading strategies the whole time?

Teacher: Yes! Most students do not know how to approach a reading text.

Researcher: So, how do you make them approach a reading text, if you say they do not know how to approach a reading text?

Teacher: I make them aware of the strategies .First ,I elicit, like what do you do when you have this type of exercise and I ask them if they have strategies ,like most of them do not know there are such strategies so I make them aware .

Researcher: Do you consider them like poor readers if they don't have those reading strategies to approach a reading comprehension text?

Teacher: they tend to have horrible strategies, like they tend to use word translator.

Researcher: So, they work on translation? So they kill the text? Kind of.

Teacher: they don't know how to approach the text, so..And they abuse the translators.

Researcher: Why do you consider these reading practices important?

Teacher: because it makes them efficient readers, like they don't take too long to understand the text and if they continue with those terrible reading strategies, they will not be able to become good readers.

Researcher: one last question .What do you think is the schema theory? Have you heard of the schema theory?

Teacher: yes, it is like they have some background .Sometimes I use it.

Researcher: how do you use it in class?

Teacher: like pre-teaching vocabulary .We have these key words. They will have a very comprehension of the text.

Researcher: Thank you so much, professor.

Teacher: anytime!

Interview11:

Researcher: So, which of the three phases of reading do you reinforce?

Teacher: the three phases of reading that I reinforce the most is inferences. Inferences is the one that I reinforce the most, students have a hard time doing it.

Researcher: so, which reading practices do you constantly use when teaching reading or reading comprehension?

Teacher: we use skimming and scanning. We use like, I mean I go for main ideas and details when the book does not have too much, it just has like a short reading only for ..

(I was not able to understand this part) Skimming and scanning and sometimes they tell what the main ideas what ... (I did not understand this part)

Researcher: Why do you consider these reading practices important?

Teacher: they are really important because that is the way that students can know the text in a different way, because sometimes they are not aware of all that information they can get from pictures ,from images ,from subtitles ,or phrases that are in the images of the readers ,so basically skimming .Skimming is not used a lot. Scanning it is and scanning is important because students need to read just to answer some questions for an exam ,so by implementing those strategies ,they do not spend so much time reading in the exam ,so they scan the information they need and they can answer faster and they can spend some time on other difficult questions.

Researcher: So they become more efficient readers.

Researcher: I want to ask you, do you know about the schema theory? Have you heard about the schema theory?

Teacher: Maybe, but I don't remember now. I remember the word, but I don't have so much information.

Researcher: schema has to deal with building up or activating prior knowledge.

Teacher: well yes, I did not know it with that name.

Researcher: that is the scientific name

Teacher: Yes, activating knowledge is like a very effective strategy, because it prepares students for what is coming, like you can't learn something new if you don't activate that part, because this strategy is going to give you like the hint to learn something new and understand the reading .So, previous knowledge is in every stage of anything that you are learning .You need it.

Researcher: so, as a teacher how do you prepare them or how do you activate that knowledge that they have? I mean, do you use it?

Teacher: Yes, I use it sometimes .I go back to anecdotes .I show them videos, I most of the time use like their own context. We are working now, for instance on an activity that was done in the favelas of Brazil .I first analyzed with them or talked to them about some activities that were done her in Barrio Abajo that they improved that area and then I showed them a video about a similar place in Cartagena, because it is so important that they know that what is in the book also happened here. They will know that what happens here also happens in other countries.

Researcher: thank you so much.

Teacher: you welcome.

Appendix C. A Sample of a Lesson Plan

Universidad Del Norte

Lesson plan: Community Builders

Level V

Teacher: Hella Darwiche Ousman

Time: 4 hours

Objectives:

Meaning-making objective: students will be able to talk about communities and community builders and how people can work together to transform their communities in a positive way.

Linguistic objectives: students will be able to express hope for the future to inspire social change. They will learn to use expressions such as: We hope....Maybe one day...

Lexical objective: Students will consolidate and extend their knowledge of lexis associated with the idea of social entrepreneurs and change .They will use the following vocabulary words in this unit: *entrepreneurs, communities, underprivileged, enhancing, facilities and empower* to describe social conditions and social change.

Materials: Dictionaries, Keynote book, video beam, computer, paper, markers, hand-outs, graphic organizers, K-W-L charts, sticky notes, articles, posters.

Competences for democratic culture:

Values: *Valuing human dignity and human rights.* Every individual human being is of equal worth, has equal dignity, and is entitled to equal respect.

Attitude: *Civic mindedness* which is an attitude towards a community or social group. A feeling of belonging to and identification with the community. A sense of solidarity and civic duty.

Skills: *Empathy* is a skill that helps us understand and relate to other people's thoughts, beliefs and feelings and to see the world from other people's perspective.

Co-operation skills are those skills that are required to participate successfully with others on shared activities. Expressing positive views and opinions. Appreciating all group members' talents and strength.

Knowledge and critical understanding: of the world.

Personal aim: to teach students the importance of valuing human dignity and show good qualities of citizenship through justice, fairness, equality, empathy, co-operation, responsibility and civic-mindedness.

Beginning	Time	Materials	Competence for democratic culture
<p>Pre: The teacher warms up the students and activates their background knowledge by posting the following question:</p> <p>➤ What do you think is wrong with our society today?</p> <p>Each student is supplied with one sticky note and invited to reflect on that question and write in one single word, what they think is a major issue or problem in our society today. They must stick those notes on the bulletin board. Students are invited to walk around and read one another's note. They can discuss them together. The answers can vary from poverty, hunger, indifference to intolerance.</p> <p>While: Then, students are grouped up into groups of four and</p>	50 min.	<p>Board</p> <p>Sticky notes</p> <p>Bulletin Board</p> <p>Short articles</p> <p>Markers</p> <p>Materials for posters</p>	<p>Knowledge and critical understanding:</p> <p>Knowledge and critical understanding of the world by interpreting social issues that need to be addressed in our world today through personal commitment and a sense of belonging to the community.</p> <p>Skills:</p> <p>Analytical and critical thinking skills.</p> <p>Co-operation skills where students are able to participate successfully with others on shared activities by expressing opinions,</p>

<p>supplied with a different information of different social entrepreneurs who contributed to tackle social issues and make the world a better place. Each group is supplied with markers and materials to create a poster about that social entrepreneur and the work that has been done by that individual. They must hang their posters around the classroom and share their thoughts and ideas with their classmates through a short oral presentation. They will learn about: (see an example on the Appendix page)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blake Mycoskie the founder of TOMS. • Shiza Shahid the global ambassador of the Malala fund. • Willie Smits the founder of the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation. 			<p>compromising with the group sharing valuable information.</p> <p>Autonomous and learning skills.</p> <p>They direct their own learning process, by reading, deducing information and writing down key notes on a poster.</p> <p>Skills of listening to the opinions expressed by others with respect.</p> <p>Attitudes :</p> <p>Civic-mindedness. A sense of civic duty, a willingness to contribute actively to community</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott Harrison, the founder of Charity. • Martin Andrade, the founder of Mi parque in Chile. <p>After:</p> <p>The teacher asks after the oral presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think is the main purpose of these individuals? • Do you consider yourself a good citizen in your community? • What have you done to help your community become a better place? 			<p>life with a sense of moral responsibility and self-efficacy.</p>
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<p>The teacher jots down some of these answers on the board to create and encourage class discussion and draw a picture of some qualities related to the notion of good citizens and citizenship.</p>			
Development	50 min		
<p>Pre: The teacher shows a world map through the projector and white board. The teacher invites students to point out which countries or continents suffer from extreme poverty. The teacher asks students to locate India (see the world map sample on the appendix page). The teacher asks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What social problems do Indians face in their communities? 		<p>World map</p> <p>Graphic organizers</p>	<p>Skills:</p> <p>Analytical and critical thinking skills.</p> <p>Autonomous and learning skills.</p> <p>Skills of listening.</p> <p>Co-operation skills</p> <p>Knowledge and critical understanding of the world.</p> <p>Attitudes:</p> <p>Civic-mindedness.</p>

<p>social entrepreneur. When the K and W columns of the chart are complete, each group is encouraged to share their ideas and questions with the class. The teacher collects the handouts and saves them to revisit later in the unit. (see an example of the K-W-L chart on the appendix page)</p> <p>The teacher asks students to read about Barefoot College on pages 68 and 69 silently (see the reading text about Barefoot College on the appendix page). The teacher, asks each group to read and write about one particular aspect of Barefoot College to discuss later in class. These are the highlighted aspects they must discuss in groups and report to class:</p>		<p>Compresion</p> <p>Questions</p> <p>Dictionaries</p>	<p>Autonomous learning skills and self- reflection.</p>
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<p>1. Who founded Barefoot College? What do we learn about him?</p> <p>2. What was his aim when he founded Barefoot College?</p> <p>3. What makes Barefoot College different from any other college? List all the examples.</p> <p>4. Which program has a significant role in Barefoot College? Explain</p> <p>5. Explain the following quote said by the Greek philosopher, Aristoteles: “For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.”</p> <p>6. What do you think Barefoot College was able to demonstrate?</p>			
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<p>They will also be encouraged to use context clues to figure out the meanings of the following vocabulary words: entrepreneurs, communities, underprivileged, enhancing, facilities and empower.</p> <p>After: students share their answers through group and class interaction. Afterwards, the teacher gives back the K-W-L charts for students to fill out the last part of the column related to what I learned from Barefoot College and its founder.</p>		K-W-L charts	
Closure	50 min		
<p>Pre: Before watching the talk, the teacher through a projector and computer, plays the song of Michael Jackson to build up prior knowledge</p>		<p>TED Talk Video</p> <p>Projector</p> <p>Computer</p>	<p>Analytical and critical thinking skills required to analyze and make judgments about the characteristics of a global citizen of the world.</p>

<p>and prepare them for the Ted Talk video. The name of the song is:</p> <p>‘They Don’t Care About Us.’</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNJL6nfu_Q</p> <p>After watching the song, the teacher asks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do you think this song takes place? • What do you know about the favelas of Rio de Janeiro? • Do you face the same conditions of poverty and violence in Colombia? • What do you think is the aim of the singer through this song? So many social issues to tackle, right? • So, what do you think our next Ted Talk is going to be about? 		Book (Keynote)	<p>Responsibility.</p> <p>Self –efficacy</p> <p>Civic-mindedness</p> <p>Knowledge and critical understanding of the world.</p>
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<p>While:</p> <p>Now, you are going to watch a TED Talk where you are going to learn how two Dutch social entrepreneurs tell the story of how they began their project of transforming the favelas of Rio de Janeiro through painting. Transforming neglected and poor places into works of art. Let's watch it.</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCXfJVCg1LA</p> <p>The Teacher plays the video two times. She pauses in between parts of the talk for students to complete some exercises related to it in the written form. Questions such as multiple choice, true and false, and ordering the sequence of events are part of these exercises. This is individual work.</p>			<p>Analytical and critical thinking skills.</p>
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<p>After: Students share their ideas in class in a collaborative environment.</p> <p>Students are asked to pinpoint or name a place in Barranquilla that has gone through the same transformational phases as the favelas in Rio through art.</p>			
Assessment	50 min		
<p>The teachers says: as you can see, these last four days we have been reading about social entrepreneurs who with their moral responsibility, self-efficacy and critical thinking skills ,empathy and co-operation skills have made the world a better place .</p> <p>Now, it is your turn to show your commitment to your own community and society by reflecting all these</p>		<p>Camera</p> <p>Cellphone</p> <p>Social media</p> <p>Computer</p> <p>Posters</p> <p>Power-point</p>	<p>Values:</p> <p>Valuing human dignity and human rights. Every individual human being is of equal worth, has equal dignity, and is entitled to equal respect.</p> <p>Attitudes:</p> <p>Civic-mindedness is an attitude towards a community or social group. A feeling of belonging to and identification with the community.</p> <p>A sense of solidarity with other</p>

<p>values, attitudes, skills and knowledge you have learned in this unit. Remember: You are the change you want to see, according to Ghandi.</p> <p>The teacher is going to ask students to group up in groups of four and volunteer on a social project of transformational implication in their own community.</p> <p>Examples are supplied :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer your time to elderly people. • Clean up a beach. • Collect medicine to sick children with low resources. • Supply food to Venezuelan refugees in Barranquilla. • Turning areas into green spaces. 			<p>people in their community through cooperation and collaboration. A sense of civic duty, a willingness to contribute actively to community life with a sense of moral responsibility and self-efficacy.</p> <p>Skills:</p> <p>Empathy is a skill that helps us understand and relate to other people's thoughts, beliefs and feelings and to see the world from other people's perspective.</p> <p>Co-operation skills are those skills that are required to participate successfully with others on shared activities. Expressing positive views and opinions. Appreciating all group members' talents and strength.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visiting prisoners and supplying them with the necessary tools to improve themselves through motivational talks. • Cook meals for the underprivileged. • Carry out a campaign to donate things people in your area do not need anymore. • Arrange a bake sale to gather money to donate school supplies to less fortunate children. • Find shelter to street dogs. <p>Students must carry out the activity together and apply the action. They must provide photos, videos or slides of the activity they are planning to carry out.</p>			
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<p>They must present their work to the class through a PowerPoint presentation, video or poster .They must explain what they learned from their experiences and how they feel now that they had contributed their time and effort to a noble cause.</p> <p>The teacher will grade their presentation by using a rubric(see the rubric on the appendix page). The teacher will offer them medals at the end of the session for their contribution and citizenship qualities.</p>			
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<p>The teachers says: as you can see, these last four days we have been reading about social entrepreneurs who with their moral responsibility, self-efficacy and critical thinking skills ,empathy and co-operation skills have made the world a better place .</p> <p>Now, it is your turn to show your commitment to your own community and society by reflecting all these values, attitudes, skills and knowledge you have learned in this unit. Remember: You are the change you want to see, according to Ghandi.</p> <p>The teacher is going to ask students to group up in groups of four and volunteer on a social project of transformational implication in their own community.</p> <p>Examples are supplied :</p>		<p>Cameras</p> <p>Cellphones</p> <p>Social media</p> <p>Computer</p> <p>Posters</p> <p>Powerpoint</p>	<p>Values:</p> <p>Valuing human dignity and human rights. Every individual human being is of equal worth, has equal dignity, and is entitled to equal respect.</p> <p>Attitudes:</p> <p>Civic-mindedness is an attitude towards a community or social group. A feeling of belonging to and identification with the community. A sense of solidarity with other people in their community through cooperation and collaboration. A sense of civic duty, a willingness to contribute actively to community life with a sense of moral responsibility and self-efficacy.</p> <p>Skills:</p> <p>Empathy is a skill that helps us understand and relate to other people´s thoughts, beliefs and feelings and to see the world from other people´s perspective.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer your time to elderly people. • Clean up a beach. • Collect medicine to sick children with low resources. • Supply food to Venezuelan refugees in Barranquilla. • Turning areas into green spaces. • Visiting prisoners and supplying them with the necessary tools to improve themselves through motivational talks. • Cook meals for the underprivileged. • Carry out a campaign to donate things people in your area do not need anymore. • Arrange a bake sale to gather money to donate school supplies to less fortunate children. 			<p>Co-operation skills are those skills that are required to participate successfully with others on shared activities.</p> <p>Expressing positive views and opinions. Appreciating all group members' talents and strength.</p>
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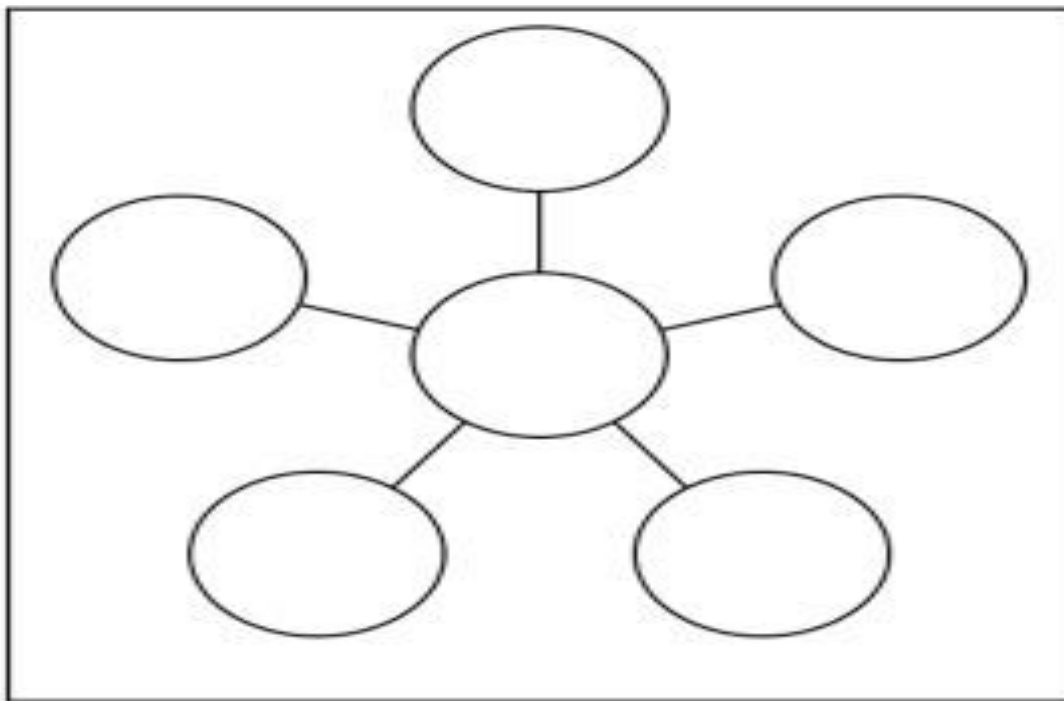
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find shelter to street dogs. <p>Students must carry out the activity together and apply the action. They must provide photos, videos or slides of the activity they are planning to carry out.</p> <p>They must present their work to the class through a PowerPoint presentation, video or poster .They must explain what they learned from their experiences and how they feel now that they had contributed their time and effort to a noble cause.</p> <p>The teacher will grade their presentation by using a rubric(see the rubric on the appendix page). The teacher will offer them medals at the end of the session for their contribution and citizenship qualities.</p>			
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Blake Mycoskie is the TOMS founder .Its popularity has spread like wildfire.His entire business model is built around the idea to help people in need.He founded TOMS in 2006 after a visit to Argentina where he learned that many children get sick or injured because they do not have shoes to wear .To combat this,he created TOMS ,a business that donates one pair of shoes to needy people for every pair that is bought .So far ,the company has donated more than a million pairs of shoes .In 2001, the Company launched another initiative which aims to give away a pair of glasses for every pair of sunglasses or glasses sold.

The Indian social activist and entrepreneur **Sanjit** has helped thousands of people in Asia and Africa to learn vital technical skills and bring solar power to some remote villages.He founded the Barefoot College , an organization wich specializes in teaching illiterate women from poor communities on how to become doctors,engineers and architects.His aim was to help improve the economic production and quality of life of women in his native India.

Shiza Shahid is the co-founder and global ambassador of the Malala fund.Like Malala ,Shahid was born in Pakistan.She reached out to Malala in 2009 and worked to organize a camp for her and other Pakistani girls.In 2010,Shiza flew to Malala's bedside after she was targeted and shot by the Taliban for promoting education for girls .Inspired by Malala's desire to continue campaigning for gender equality and education ,Shahid decided to help Malala strategize her campaign and created the Malala Fund ,which helps empower women and girls ,by spreading access to education.

Willie Smits ,a former microbiologist working in Indonesia ,never intended on becoming a social entrepreneur.It was not until he had an encounter in Indonesia with a baby Orangutan who has left to die in a trash heap that he decided he needed to change the world.This incident sparked the beginnings of what would become the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation,a foundation dediacted to helping abandoned apes .



K-W-L Chart

*Assess what you know about a particular topic before and after you have engaged with it. Fill the the columns below with what you **K**now about the topic, what you **W**ant to know, and what you've **L**earned.*

What do you K now about the topic?	What do you W ant to know?	What did you L earn?

5C

Barefoot College

PRE-READING Scanning

Scan the passage. Give an example of a skill that students learn at Barefoot College.

5.9

The Greek philosopher Aristotle once said, "For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them."

This method of "learning by doing" has allowed Barefoot College to successfully train and educate millions of underprivileged people. Barefoot College was founded by Sanjit "Bunker" Roy. Shortly after graduating from Delhi University, Roy did some volunteer work in a poor region of India. The experience changed his life, and in 1972 he set up Barefoot College. His aim was to help rural communities overcome their difficulties and become more independent.

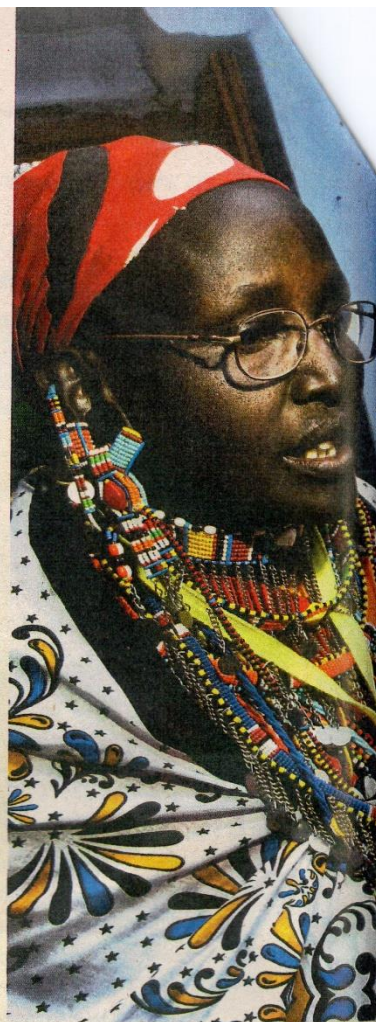
Barefoot College is unlike any other college. All of its students around the world are from poor, rural communities. They don't have to be able to read or write—indeed, many can't. People of any age can attend—the school has a wide range of students, from children to grandmothers.

The college is owned and managed by everyone who works and learns there. These "Barefoot Professionals" are trained to perform all sorts of duties in the school, from providing dental² care services to cooking meals for staff and students.

No degrees or certificates are given out. But graduates return to their villages with their new skills and work to make their communities self-sufficient³ by training other villagers. Being able to use their skills to serve their communities is **proof** of success.

The solar engineering program at Barefoot College has a **significant** role. Every year, the

college **recruits** middle-aged women from rural villages that don't have electricity. For six months, the women learn how to build, install, use, and maintain solar lamps. The lack of a common language isn't a problem; they communicate through sign language and work with color-coded equipment. Through hands-on training, the women transform into solar engineers by the end of the program. The self-confidence they gain allows them to go on and inspire positive change in their villages. Since 2008, the women have managed to provide electricity to over 1,000 villages, bringing light to more than 40,000 households.





Neema Gurung is one of the solar engineers at Barefoot College. With some financial help from the Indian government, she left her village in Nepal to take part in the program. As her village has no
 50 electricity, Gurung always had to finish her chores by sunset. For her, learning how to build solar lamps and bring light to her village will help greatly in **ensuring** the safety of her home. "Tigers often
 55 locals in the past," Gurung explains. "It's like we are locked in our own house after darkness."

Barefoot College has demonstrated how education can empower rural people and help

them live better lives. After its success in India,
 60 Barefoot College decided to expand its programs overseas. Today, it has a number of regional training centers in countries such as Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and Senegal. Through their hard work and **dedication**, thousands of
 65 Barefoot College graduates and teachers have transformed their communities into better places to live.

¹ **rural**: *adj.* of the countryside and not the city

² **dental**: *adj.* related to the teeth

³ **self-sufficient**: *adj.* not requiring any form of help for survival

CRITERIA	5 POINTS	4 POINTS	3 POINTS	2 POINTS	1 POINT
Content & Development	An excellent, comprehensive, thorough description of their project, and a thoughtful critical reflection of the project and their role in it.	A good description of their project, and a critical reflection of the project and their role in it.	An adequate description of the project and an adequate critical reflection, only making a few superficial ideas.	An inadequate description of the project, some details not being understood clearly. The students only makes one or two superficial comments on the reflection.	A poor description of the project, difficult to understand what the group did. The students include no critical reflection of the project or their role in it.
Group Interaction and a sense of collaboration within the group.	The students demonstrate an excellent interaction with the group.	The students demonstrate a good interaction with the group, actively listening, and asking relevant reflection-based questions.	The students demonstrate adequate interaction with the group, occasionally contributing with reflection-based questions and opinions.	The students demonstrate poor interaction, only contributing once or twice with basic questions, comments or opinions.	The students demonstrate very poor interaction, discussing their own project with poor presentation skills.
Grammatical Accuracy (SLO 8) Including: Past simple, Conjunctions for cause and	Completely accurate production of all listed grammatical concepts where attempted.	Mostly accurate production of all listed grammatical concepts without	Listed grammatical concepts attempted but often inaccurately used.	Listed grammatical concepts have not been attempted. Other grammatical errors consistent	Significant errors in grammar means mostly not understood.

effect Intensifiers (too, enough, so, such, too much)	Only minor errors noted generally.	affecting comprehension where attempted. Other grammatical errors noted but don't affect understanding.	Other grammatical errors noted and consistent, but don't affect understanding.	and often affects understanding.	
Vocabulary Use	Nearly all vocabulary was appropriate for the level and included many examples of key vocabulary from course content.	Vocabulary was appropriate for the level and was mostly connected to key vocabulary from course content.	Acceptable use of vocabulary for the level but little effort was made to use key vocabulary from the class content.	Several errors in vocabulary that may have affected comprehensibility .	Significant errors in vocabulary that affected comprehensibility.
Pron (SLO 9) Including: Contractions using have and be Pronunciation of 'th' sounds Word linking Reductions using 'to'	Students are clear and comprehensible in general. Pronunciation of individual words are clear. NB. Extra attention will be focused on the listed items.	Mostly accurate pronunciation without affecting comprehension	Adequate pronunciation, with errors not affecting comprehension too much	Several errors in pronunciation and some affect comprehension	Significant errors in pronunciation that affect comprehensibility a lot

Reductions : ‘d’ya’ and ‘didja’ Thought groups					
					Total: _____ / 25